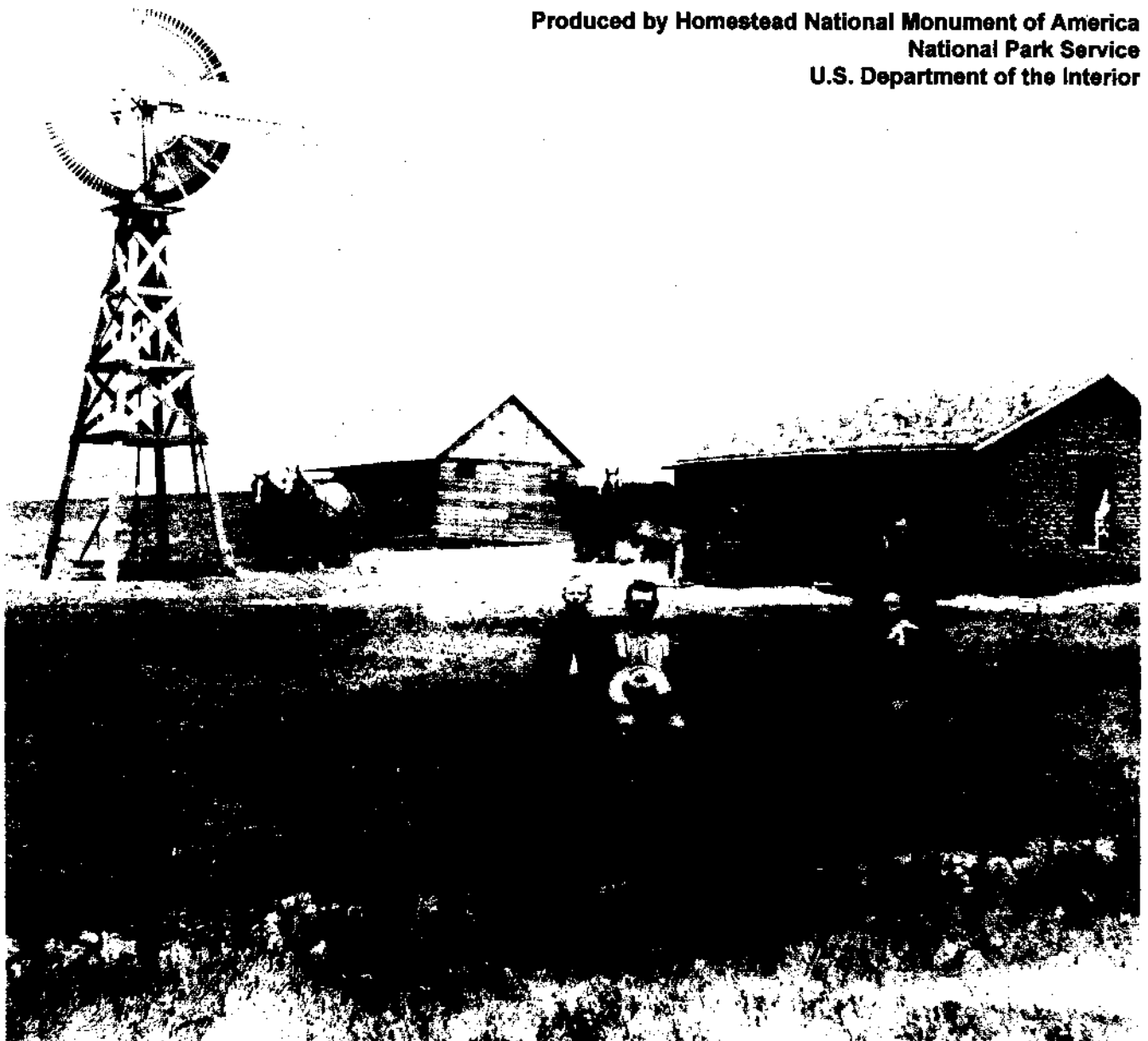


# **HOMESTEADING: THE FREE LAND IDEA**

**An Activity Guide for Teachers  
Grades 4 through 6**

**Produced by Homestead National Monument of America  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior**



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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Front Cover Photo Courtesy of Nebraska Historical Society, Photo by Solomon D. Butcher;  
Sod House, 1887, Custer County, Nebraska, Photo #D1204



This educator's guide was funded by the National Park Service and a grant from the National Park Foundation<sup>SM</sup>. Parks as Classrooms is the educational program of the National Park Service with the National Park Foundation.



## Introduction to Using This Guide

This curriculum guide is designed for use by teachers and other educators who live within field trip distance of Homestead National Monument of America. Some activities are designed for the classroom, and some are more effective if they are conducted outdoors. Many of the activities can be done at the school. This activity guide presents unique offerings of teacher resources available from Homestead National Monument of America.

The activities in this guide are written for upper elementary grades, but many can be modified for other grade levels. The background information provided in each unit is primarily to assist teachers in understanding the activities and lessons.

We encourage teachers to use these activities with the students and to visit the monument when possible. One activity in each section is designed to be used on-site at Homestead National Monument of America. Each on-site activity contains a section to adapt the activity to the classroom, but would not be as effective as completing the activity on-site at the monument. We welcome any comments you have about this guide.

## Visiting the Monument

As you begin planning your visit to the monument, please contact the Education Coordinator at (402) 223-3514 to schedule a time. Several of the on-site activities can be done by the teacher without staff assistance. However, the monument needs to schedule school groups in order for materials and space to be available. Please make arrangements as far as possible in advance. Reservations must be made at least **two weeks** prior to your school visit.

If schools have limits on the number of field trips permitted during the school year, teachers might want to combine several activities together at the monument. If this is the case, please include this information in the initial request when calling for school group reservations.

## Overview of the Units

This guide is organized into seven units, each about a specific topic. Teachers are encouraged to be flexible and creative when using the materials, adapting the suggestions to the needs of the students.

Units open with background introductory material for teacher use. Following this information are ideas for activities with students. The sidebars contain glossary terms which are also in italics in the text. Reproducible pages and material sheets that can be used for the activities are at the end of the units.

- UNIT 1**     **Homestead and the Park Service** introduces students to the National Park Service and Homestead National Monument of America. In this section, students are introduced to Claimsey, who will be their companion through many of the activities.
- UNIT 2**     **Homestead History** shows students what a person had to do to file a homestead claim and to gain ownership.
- UNIT 3**     **Prairie Balance** describes the ecosystem of the prairie environment and enables students to understand the prairie, and the plants and animals who live there.
- UNIT 4**     **People on the Plains** introduces students to the wide variety of people who lived on the plains, starting with American Indians and those who came to the western United States to settle.
- UNIT 5**     **Prairie Life** helps students understand that the "free land" had a cost for homesteaders and assists students in discovering how to live on the prairie as a homesteader.
- UNIT 6**     **The Legacy** helps students pull it all together and understand the Homestead Act of 1862. This unit includes summary reinforcement activities.
- UNIT 7**     **Resource Materials & Bibliography** gives a list of possible resources to assist educators and students in obtaining more knowledge.

### Organization of Individual Activities

Each activity begins with a section providing the theme and objectives for the activity, the materials needed, the related subject areas, and skills involved. "An Exploring Experience" is included for each activity to assist students in exploring the information in greater detail.

# HOMESTEADING, THE FREE LAND IDEA

Education Curriculum Guide for grades 4 through 6  
Homestead National Monument of America

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## THEME:

The homesteaders came west for what they thought was free land and found that it came with a high cost. American Indians and the prairie environment also paid a high price because of the homesteading movement. Whole ways of life changed, some for better and some for worse.

## OBJECTIVES:

After the activities in the guide are completed, the following will be accomplished.

1. The students will be able to explain at least one "cost" or way in which the Homestead Act of 1862 affected the lives of homesteaders, the prairie, and American Indians.
2. Students will know how a homesteader filed a claim and be able to list two requirements to receive title to the land.
3. Students will be able to tell how a homesteader lived in reference to the following:
  - a. types of houses
  - b. tools used
  - c. disasters or hardships they faced.
4. Students will be able to name three ways in which pioneers used the natural resources of the prairie to survive.
5. Students will be able to list two different groups of people that came to the plains to homestead for free land.
6. Students will be able to state that Homestead National Monument of America is a National Park Service area, and will be able to tell:
  - a. why Congress wanted to create it
  - b. who owns it today
  - c. who is responsible for helping to protect it
7. Students will be able to name two types of animals or plants that lived on the prairie before homesteading began.

# NATIONAL PARK SERVICE EDUCATION PROGRAM AND STATE CURRICULUM

The staff of Homestead National Monument of America created learning activities and interpretive text for teachers and students that will lead to exploration, discovery, discussion, and creative thinking about the history of the Homestead Act and its effects on this nation. Our purpose is to link learning in this National Park to the curriculum standards proposed for elementary age students in Nebraska and Kansas. The following list presents the questions and concepts that our park staff, teachers, and students will tackle in working through this educational guide. They are taken from the Social Studies and Math and Science Frameworks for Nebraska Schools and the Curricular Standards for Science in Kansas.

## Social Studies

### Nebraska Social Studies Themes

#### **Concept: Civic Ideals and Practices**

What roles do families, schools, communities, and community groups play in developing citizenship?

How do civic ideals and practices of the individual affect environmental issues?

How do geographic landforms affect civic ideals and practices?

How do values and beliefs influence economic decisions in different societies?

#### **Concept: Culture**

How do physical environments and cultures interact?

How can differences in cultures create understanding or misunderstanding?

When/how/why have cultures changed as a result of new scientific and technological knowledge?

How do cultures address basic human needs?

How do physical environments and cultures interact?

How do different cultures utilize resources?

How/why does culture define acceptable behavior and shape individual development and identity?

How do power, authority, and governance affect changes in culture?

#### **Concept: Global Connections**

How do global connections affect the needs and wants and, therefore, production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services?

What changes in scientific knowledge and technology have affected global communities?

How can people's interaction with others, with places, and with environments affect global activities?

#### **Concept: Individual Development and Identity**

How does one person's actions affect another?

Why are rules necessary?

How does my ethnic background influence my daily life?

How are people personally connected to their immediate surroundings?

Why is it important for an individual to be a producer as well as a consumer?

How does public opinion affect individual decisions and choices?

How are people personally connected to their community and nation?

**Concept: Individual Groups and Institutions**

What are the responsibilities of the individual to the governing institutions?

How can individuals contribute to the well being of their community?

How do institutions change?

How are the lives of individuals, groups, and institutions influenced by science and technology?

How are individuals and groups in your state linked to countries around the world?

**Concept: People, Places and Environments**

How does perception of the environment change over time?

How do people modify the natural landscapes?

How does change of place affect decision making?

How do people adapt when their surroundings change?

How do people create places that reflect cultural values and ideals?

**Concept: Power, Authority, and Governance**

How does government directly affect peoples' lives?

Why are cooperation and compromise important in a democratic system?

**Concept: Production, Distribution, and Consumption**

What does scarcity mean? What are some examples of resources that are scarce in your school?

What is meant by "exchange of goods and services?" Explain how goods and services can be exchanged by direct trading or "bartering?"

Productivity refers to the output of goods and services from a set of resources. Why do people become more productive when they specialize in what they do best? How is productivity increased by using more tools and machines?

**Concept: Science, Technology, and Society**

In what ways has technology changed transportation and communication?

Why do people invent things?

How has technology helped us conserve our natural resources?

**Concept: Time, Continuity, and Change**

What kinds of records have people kept in the past? Why did they keep these records?

What is the relationship between cause and effect?

How can one use records to reconstruct the past?

What groups have shaped Nebraska's cultural history? What contributions has each group made?

How has Nebraska's geography shaped its history?

## Mathematics and Science

### Nebraska Framework for Upper Elementary Science

#### **Concept: Forces and Motion**

Investigate and explain the effect of force on motion.

Design and analyze simple machines.

#### **Concept: Diversity**

Create a classification scheme

Investigate and communicate how a species adapts to its environment.

#### **Concept: Interdependence**

Determine the basic requirements for living things to survive in particular environments.

Illustrate and discuss relationships in a food web.

Analyze the impact of humans on a natural habitat.

Study food chains by visiting local prairies. Sites should be revisited throughout the year to observe changes.

### Kansas Curriculum Standards for Science

#### **Concept: Applies problem solving skills**

Identifies objects within a system and their interactions.

Distinguishes inferences from observations.

Observes phenomena and makes predictions.

Uses data from graphs to make predictions.

Practices measuring length, weight, and

volume by comparison to a standard unit of measurement.

Uses data to describe what happened in the investigation.

Sees relationships between interacting objects.

#### **Concept: Applies problem-solving skills to authentic, community-based issues**

Conducts simple group investigations using community resources.

Communicates meaning by using oral, written, mathematical, and symbolic language (e.g., tables, graphs, visual aids and technology).

#### **Concept: The Integration of Science**

Identifies the parts and interactions of natural systems.

Analyzes and connects systems and their interactions in the natural world.

Recognizes that interactions of matter and energy follow patterns of nature and are reproducible.

Describes cyclic changes in the natural world.

Utilizes physical and conceptual models to represent phenomena.

Recognizes that scientific knowledge, thinking processes, and skills are used in a great variety of careers.

Traces historical developments in science and technology to contemporary counterparts.

Analyzes how technological developments affect leisure time.

Recognizes that humans have an ecological impact on the equilibrium of the biosphere.

Identifies the societal beliefs that affect the environment.

# **HOMESTEAD AND THE PARK SERVICE**



## **Unit One**

# Homestead and the National Park Service

## UNIT ONE

The following is background information for creating lesson plans. Activities start on page 4.

### The National Park Service

#### A History

The idea of preserving special natural and cultural places in public ownership ran contrary to the prevailing national mood during the 19th century; most Americans saw nature as something to be conquered and history as what had happened hundreds of years before. But as the wilderness receded and remnants of prehistoric civilization and Revolutionary War landmarks were lost, some saw the need to protect outstanding examples of the nation's heritage. Writing on a trip to the Dakotas in 1832, George Catlin expressed concern about westward expansion's effects on Indian civilization, *wildlife*, and *wilderness*. He dreamed that these places might be "by some great protecting policy of the government preserved . . . in a magnificent park . . . A nation's park, containing man and beast, in all wildness and freshness of their nature's beauty!" So Catlin, noted painter of American Indians, is credited with first expressing the national park idea.



The first move by the Government to protect a grand natural landscape came in 1864 when it granted Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Tree Grove to the State of

California to be "held for public use, resort, and recreation . . . inalienable for all time." Following exploration of the Yellowstone region in the Montana and Wyoming territories,

Congress reserved these spectacular areas in 1872, as "a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." Since the areas were territories instead of states, the park remained under the Department of the Interior as Yellowstone National Park - the world's first area so titled. In the 1890's four more national parks were created: Sequoia, General Grant (later Kings Canyon), Yosemite, and Mount Rainier. Army engineers and cavalry units developed and protected these sites through arrangements made between the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of War.

#### GLOSSARY

*Commemorate* - to serve as a reminder of something

*Diversity* - a variety of different groups, items or people

*Generations* - all the people born within the same period of time; our grandparents

*Homesteading* - a movement where a family or an individual acquires land from the U.S. government by filing a record, and living on and cultivating the land.

*Mission* - a vision or task shared by a group of people

*Wildlife* - animals and plants in their natural state

*Wilderness* - a place unchanged by humans and left in its natural state

Under the Antiquities Act of 1906, the President could proclaim historic and scientific interest areas on the public lands as national monuments. Devils Tower National Monument became the first proclaimed by President Theodore Roosevelt.

By 1916, the Interior Department managed 14 national parks and 21 national monuments. Congress created a new bureau within the Department of Interior to manage these areas with a twofold purpose: "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." The National Park Service was established to preserve and protect for present and future generations these special sites. The young bureau mainly supervised sites west of the Mississippi River, while battlefields and monuments in the East were under the management of the War Department. Other monuments were managed by the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture. In 1933, the government reorganized, and all of these areas were united under the National Park Service.

## The National Park Service Today

Over the years, many different sites have been added to the National Park System besides national parks and monuments. Today, the system includes national memorials, battlefields and cemeteries, preserves, rivers and riverways, historical parks and sites, lakeshores, parkways, military parks, recreation areas, seashores, scenic riverways and trails, wild and scenic rivers, and historic trails. In all, the National Park System contains over 350 units.



## Homestead National Monument of America

Established in 1936 by an act of Congress, Homestead National Monument of America was set aside to *commemorate* the

Homestead Act of 1862. Homestead National Monument of America is the site of the Daniel Freeman *homestead*, one the first filers under the Homestead Act of 1862. Located 4 miles west of Beatrice, Nebraska on Nebraska Highway 4, the monument contains Freeman's 160-acre claim plus an additional 40 acres.

## Museum and Visitor Center



Park Rangers are available at the Visitor Center to answer questions. Located within the Visitor Center is the museum, the auditorium, the implement exhibit, and a bookstore. Hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00

p.m. daily. The park is closed three days of the year on Thanksgiving Day, December 25, and January 1.

## Buildings

The Palmer-Epard Cabin is located in the courtyard outside of the Visitor Center. The Freeman School House is located one-quarter mile west of the Visitor Center and open upon request.

## Trails on the Tallgrass prairie

The restored tallgrass prairie has walking trails varying in length from 1 to 2 ½ miles. The trails are open from sunrise to sunset.

Hours are subject to change.

## Activity 1

### The National Park Service

**Theme:**

The National Park Service protects and preserves special areas for the public to enjoy now and in the future.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to explain what the National Park Service does with the lands it manages.
2. Students will be able to tell who owns National Park Service sites.
3. Students will be able to identify National Park Service sites in the United States.

**Materials Needed:** Maps:

United States and the National Park System, Material Sheets: List of National Park Service sites, National Park Service Arrowhead, and Park Names

**Subject:** geography, history

**Skills:** mapping, locating, and transposition

**Methods:** This activity will introduce students to the National Park System and explain to them why these areas were set aside. Students will see there are many different sites and will be able to locate several of them. Students will learn that these areas are owned by the people of the United States.

1. Introduce students to the National Park Service (NPS) with the NPS Arrowhead and explain that this is the symbol of the NPS. Ask them what is a park. Then, what is a National Park, and if anyone has visited one. (If someone has, ask what is one thing they remember about the area.)
2. Explain that a National Park Service site is a special area set aside by the government for all people to enjoy. Explain the *mission* of the park service is to preserve and protect special sites for present and future generations.

Use the Material Sheet: List of National Park Service Sites showing all the parks. You can prepare an overhead transparency or pass out the list to group leaders. Name the different types of National Park Service sites.

3. Break students down into groups of 4-5 people. Give each group 10 parks with just the name (use Material Sheet: Park Names, cut out). Students are to find out which type of site the 10 parks are by using the List of National Park Service Sites sheet.
4. After students have determined the type of park, have students locate the park on the National Park Service map and place it in the approximate position on the United States map. This will help them gain an awareness of the *diversity* of our *heritage*.
5. Ask students who they think owns these sites. Then point to several students and say "you and you . . ." Let students know that these sites belong to them. It is part of our heritage as United States citizens.

**An Exploring Experience:** If your class has access to the Internet, have students contact a National Park Service site and ask about the history of the park and some information on that site. This can be done through the World Wide Web Home Pages at <http://www.nps.gov>. Or have students write to different parks, requesting information. Then have students present the information to the class or make a bulletin board display of the different areas.

**NATIONAL PARK ARROWHEAD  
MATERIAL SHEET**

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# LIST OF NATIONAL PARKS

## MATERIAL SHEET

### National Parks

Acadia  
 Arches  
 Badlands  
 Big Bend  
 Biscayne  
 Bryce Canyon  
 Canyonlands  
 Capitol Reef  
 Carlsbad Caverns  
 Channel Island  
 Crater Lake  
 Denali (& Preserve)  
 Everglades  
 Gates of the Arctic (& Preserve)  
 Glacier Bay  
 Glacier  
 Grand Canyon  
 Grand Teton  
 Great Basin  
 Great Smoky Mountains  
 Guadalupe Mountains  
 Haleakala  
 Hawaii Volcanoes  
 Hot Springs  
 Isle Royale  
 Katmai (& Preserve)  
 Kenai Fjords  
 Kings Canyon  
 Kobuk Valley  
 Lake Clark (& Preserve)  
 Lassen Volcanic  
 Mammoth Cave  
 Mesa Verde  
 Mount Rainier  
 National Park of American Samoa  
 North Cascades  
 Olympic  
 Petrified Forest  
 Redwood  
 Rocky Mountain  
 Roosevelt Campobello International Park  
 Sequoia  
 Shenandoah  
 Theodore Roosevelt  
 Virgin Islands  
 Voyageurs  
 Wind Cave  
 Wrangell-St. Elias (& Preserve)  
 Yellowstone  
 Yosemite

### Zion

#### National Historic Site

Abraham Lincoln Birthplace  
 Adams  
 Allegheny Portage Railroad  
 Andersonville  
 Andrew Johnson  
 Bent's Old Fort  
 Boston African-American  
 Brown V. Board of Education  
 Carl Sandburg Home  
 Chaco Canyon  
 Charles Pickney  
 Chicago Portage  
 Christiansted  
 Clara Barton  
 Colonial  
 Edgar Allan Poe  
 Edison  
 Eisenhower  
 Eleanor Roosevelt  
 Eugene O'Neill  
 Ford's Theatre  
 Fort Bowie  
 Fort Davis  
 Fort Laramie  
 Fort Larned  
 Fort Point  
 Fort Raleigh  
 Fort Scott  
 Fort Union Trading Post  
 Fort Vancouver  
 Frederick Law Olmsted  
 Friendship Hill  
 Gloria Dei (Old Swedes) Church  
 Golden Spike  
 Grant-Kohrs Ranch  
 Hampton  
 Harry S Truman  
 Herbert Hoover  
 Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt  
 Hopewell Furnace  
 Hubbell Trading Post  
 James A. Garfield  
 Jamestown  
 Jefferson National Expansion Memorial  
 Jimmy Carter  
 John Fitzgerald Kennedy  
 John Muir

### Knife River Indian Village

Lincoln Home  
 Longfellow  
 Maggie L. Walker  
 Martin Luther King Jr.  
 Martin Van Buren  
 McLoughlin House  
 Ninety Six  
 Palo Alto Battlefield  
 Pennsylvania Avenue  
 Puukohola Heiau  
 Sagamore Hill  
 Saint Croix Island  
 (International)  
 Saint Paul's Church  
 Saint-Gaudens  
 Salem Maritime  
 San Juan  
 Saugus Iron Works  
 Sewall-Beimont House  
 Springfield Armory  
 Steamtown  
 Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace  
 Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural  
 Thomas Stone  
 Touro Synagogue  
 Tuskegee Institute  
 Ulysses S. Grant  
 Vanderbilt Mansion  
 Weir Farm  
 Whitman Mission  
 William Howard Taft

### National Monuments

Agate Fossil Beds  
 Alibates Flint Quarries  
 Aniakchak (& Preserve)  
 Aztec Ruins  
 Bandelier  
 Black Canyon of the Gunnison  
 Brooker T. Washington  
 Buck Island Reef  
 Cabrillo  
 Canyon De Chelly  
 Cape Krusenstern  
 Capulin Volcano  
 Casa Grande  
 Castillo De San Marcos  
 Castle Clinton  
 Cedar Breaks  
 Chiricahua  
 Colorado

**National Monuments  
(Continue)**

Congaree Swamp  
Craters of the Moon  
Death Valley  
Devils Postpile  
Devils Tower  
Dinosaur  
Effigy Mounds  
El Malpais  
El Morro  
Florissant Fossil Beds  
Fort Frederica  
Fort Jefferson  
Fort Matanzas  
Fort McHenry  
Fort Pulaski  
Fort Stanwix  
Fort Sumter  
Fort Union  
Fossil Butte  
George Washington Birthplace  
George Washington Carver  
Gila Cliffs Dwellings  
Grand Portage  
Great Sand Dunes  
Hagerman Fossil Beds  
Hohokam Pima  
Homestead (of America)  
Hovenweep  
Jewel Cave  
John Day Fossil Beds  
Joshua Tree  
Lava Beds  
Little Bighorn Battlefield  
Montezuma Castle  
Muir Woods  
Natural Bridges  
Navajo  
Ocmulgee  
Oregon Caves  
Organ Pipe Cactus  
Petroglyph  
Pinnacles (& Reserve)  
Pipe Spring  
Pipestone  
Poverty Point  
Rainbow Bridge  
Russell Caves  
Saguaro  
Salinas Pueblo Missions  
Scotts Bluff  
Statue of Liberty  
Sunset Crater  
Timpanogos Cave  
Tonto  
Tumacacori

Tuzigoot  
Walnut Canyon  
Washington  
White Sands  
Wupatki  
Yucca House

**National Preserves and  
Reserves**

Bering Land Bridge (Preserve)  
Big Cypress (Preserve)  
Big Thicket (Preserve)  
City of Rocks (Reserve)  
Ebey's Landing (Reserve)  
Glacier Bay (Preserve)  
Ice Age (Scientific Reserve)  
Noatak (Preserve)  
Pinelands (Reserve)  
Timucuan (Preserve)  
Yukon-Charley Rivers  
(Preserve)

**National Historic and Scenic  
Trails**

Appalachian (Scenic)  
California (Historic)  
Ice Age (Scenic)  
Lewis & Clark (Historic)  
Masau Trail  
Mormon Pioneer (Historic)  
Natchez Trace (Scenic)  
North Country (Scenic)  
Oregon (Historic)  
Overmountain Victory (Historic)  
Pony Express (Historic)  
Potomac Heritage (Scenic)  
Santa Fe (Historic)

**National Recreation Areas**

Amistad  
Bighorn Canyon  
Chattahoochee River  
Chickasaw  
Coulee Dam  
Curecanti  
Cuyahoga Valley  
Delaware Water Gap  
Gateway  
Gauley River  
Glen Canyon  
Golden Gate  
Lake Chelan  
Lake Mead  
Lake Meredith

Ross Lake  
Santa Monica Mountains  
Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity

**National Rivers, Riverways,  
Scenic Rivers, and Wild  
Rivers**

Alagnak (Wild)  
Big South Fork (River)  
Bluestone (Scenic River)  
Buffalo (River)  
Delaware (Scenic River)  
Lower St. Croix (Scenic  
Riverway)  
Mississippi (River & Recreation)  
Missouri (Recreation River)  
New River Gorge (River)  
Niobrara/Missouri (Riverways)  
Obed (Wild & Scenic)  
Ozark (Scenic Riverways)  
Rio Grande (Wild & Scenic)  
Saint Croix (Scenic Riverway)  
Upper Delaware (Scenic &  
Recreation River)

**National Historic Parks**

Appomattox Court House  
Boston  
Chesapeake & Ohio Canal  
Cumberland Gap  
Dayton Aviation Heritage  
George Rogers Clark  
Harpers Ferry  
Hopewell Culture  
Independence  
Jean Lafitte ( & Preserve)  
Kalaupapa  
Kaloko-Honokohau  
Keweenaw  
Klondike Gold Rush  
Lowell  
Lyndon B. Johnson  
Minute Man  
Morristown  
Natchez  
Nez Perce  
Pecos  
Pu'uhonua O Honaunau  
Salt River Bay (& Preserve)  
San Antonio Missions  
San Francisco Maritime  
San Juan Island  
Saratoga  
Sitka  
Valley Forge

**National Historic Parks**

(Continued)

War in the Pacific  
Women's Rights  
Zuni-Cibola

**National Battlefields and  
Cemeteries**

Antietam  
Big Hole  
Brices Cross Roads  
Cowpens  
Fort Donelson  
Fort Necessity  
Kennesaw Mountain  
Manassas  
Monocacy  
Moores Creek  
Petersburg  
Richmond  
Stones River  
Tupelo  
Wilson's Creek

**National Lakeshores and  
Seashores**

Apostle Islands (Lakeshore)  
Assateague Island (Seashore)  
Canaveral (Seashore)  
Cape Cod (Seashore)  
Cape Hatteras (Seashore)  
Cape Lookout (Seashore)  
Cumberland Island (Seashore)  
Fire Island (Seashore)  
Gulf Islands (Seashore)  
Indiana Dunes (Lakeshore)  
Padre Island (Seashore)  
Pictured Rocks (Lakeshore)  
Point Reyes (Seashore)  
Sleeping Bear Dunes  
(Lakeshore)

**National Memorials**

American Memorial Park  
Arkansas Post  
Benjamin Franklin  
Chamizal  
Coronado  
David Berger  
De Soto  
Father Marquette  
Federal Hall  
Fort Caroline

Fort Clatsop  
General Grant  
George Washington Memorial  
Parkway  
Hamilton Grange  
Johnstown Flood  
Jefferson  
LBJ Memorial Grove-On-The-  
Potomac  
Lincoln  
Lincoln Boyhood  
Mount Rushmore  
Perry's Victory & International  
Peace  
Roger Williams  
Thaddeus Kosciuszko  
U.S.S. Arizona  
Warren G. Harding  
Wright Brothers

**National Military Parks**

Chickamauga & Chattanooga  
Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania  
Gettysburg  
Guilford Courthouse  
Horseshoe Bend  
Kings Mountain  
Pea Ridge  
Shiloh (& Cemetery)  
Vicksburg (& Cemetery)

**National Cemeteries**

Battleground  
Poplar Grove  
Yorktown

**Other National Park Areas**

Blue Ridge Parkway\*\*  
Catoclain Park\*\*  
Claude Moore Colonial Farm\*\*  
Constitution Gardens\*\*  
Ellis Island  
Fort Washington Park\*\*  
Frederick Douglass Home\*\*  
Great Falls Park\*\*  
Green Belt Park\*\*  
Illinois & Michigan Canal  
International Peace Garden  
John D. Rockefeller Parkway  
Natchez Trace Parkway  
National Mall\*\*  
Piscataway Park\*\*  
Prince William Forest Park\*\*  
Rock Creek Park\*\*  
White House\*\*  
Wolf Trap Farm Park\*\*

\*\* located in the D.C. area

<b>Ulyssess S. Grant</b>	<b>Castillo De San Marcos</b>	<b>Women's Rights</b>
<b>Knife River Indian Village</b>	<b>Curecanti</b>	<b>Appomatox Court House</b>
<b>Minute Man</b>	<b>Antietam</b>	<b>Cap Cod</b>
<b>Battleground</b>	<b>Federal Hall</b>	<b>Saratoga</b>
<b>Curecanti</b>	<b>Gates of the Artic</b>	<b>Lower St. Croix</b>
<b>Morristown</b>	<b>Fort Sumter</b>	<b>Ebey's Landing</b>
<b>Sleeping Bear Dunes</b>	<b>Biscayne</b>	<b>Saugus Iron Works</b>
<b>Martin Luther King Jr.</b>	<b>Golden Gate</b>	<b>Obed</b>
<b>Noatak</b>	<b>Horseshoe Bend</b>	<b>Kennesaw Mountain</b>
<b>Indiana Dunes</b>	<b>Harry S Truman</b>	<b>Grand Canyon</b>

<b>Agate Fossil Beds</b>	<b>Golden Spike</b>	<b>Acadia</b>
<b>Bering Land Bridge</b>	<b>Santa Fe</b>	<b>Chickasaw</b>
<b>Buffalo</b>	<b>Boston</b>	<b>San Antonio Missions</b>
<b>Yorktown</b>	<b>Assateague Island</b>	<b>Chamizal</b>
<b>Big Hole</b>	<b>Yosemite</b>	<b>Gettysberg</b>
<b>El Malpais</b>	<b>George Rogers Clark</b>	<b>Pecos</b>
<b>Jean Lafitte</b>	<b>Lewis &amp; Clark</b>	<b>Appalachian</b>
<b>Wupatki</b>	<b>Delaware</b>	<b>Jamestown</b>
<b>Santa Monica Mountains</b>	<b>Colonial</b>	<b>Fort Laramie</b>
<b>Boston African-American</b>	<b>Big Bend</b>	<b>Shenandoah</b>

## Activity 2

### You Are Here

**Theme:**

Homestead National Monument of America was set aside as a National Park Service site because of its significance in interpreting an important historical era.

**Objective:**

1. Students will be able to state why Homestead National Monument of America was set aside as a special area.
2. Students will be able to locate Homestead National Monument of America on the following maps: United States, Nebraska, and Gage County.

**Materials Needed:** Maps: United States, Nebraska, Gage County; Handouts of maps for students, Transparencies of maps, pencils and markers

**Subject:** social studies, geography

**Skills:** brainstorming, listing, mapping, shading, labeling

**Methods:** Students will be introduced to the concept of homesteading, Homestead National Monument of America, and Claimsey. Students will use maps of the United States, Nebraska, and Gage County to locate the monument. Students will locate and identify Homestead National Monument of America, related communities, counties, and the state of Nebraska by labeling and coloring (shading) maps of the United States, the state of Nebraska, and Gage County.

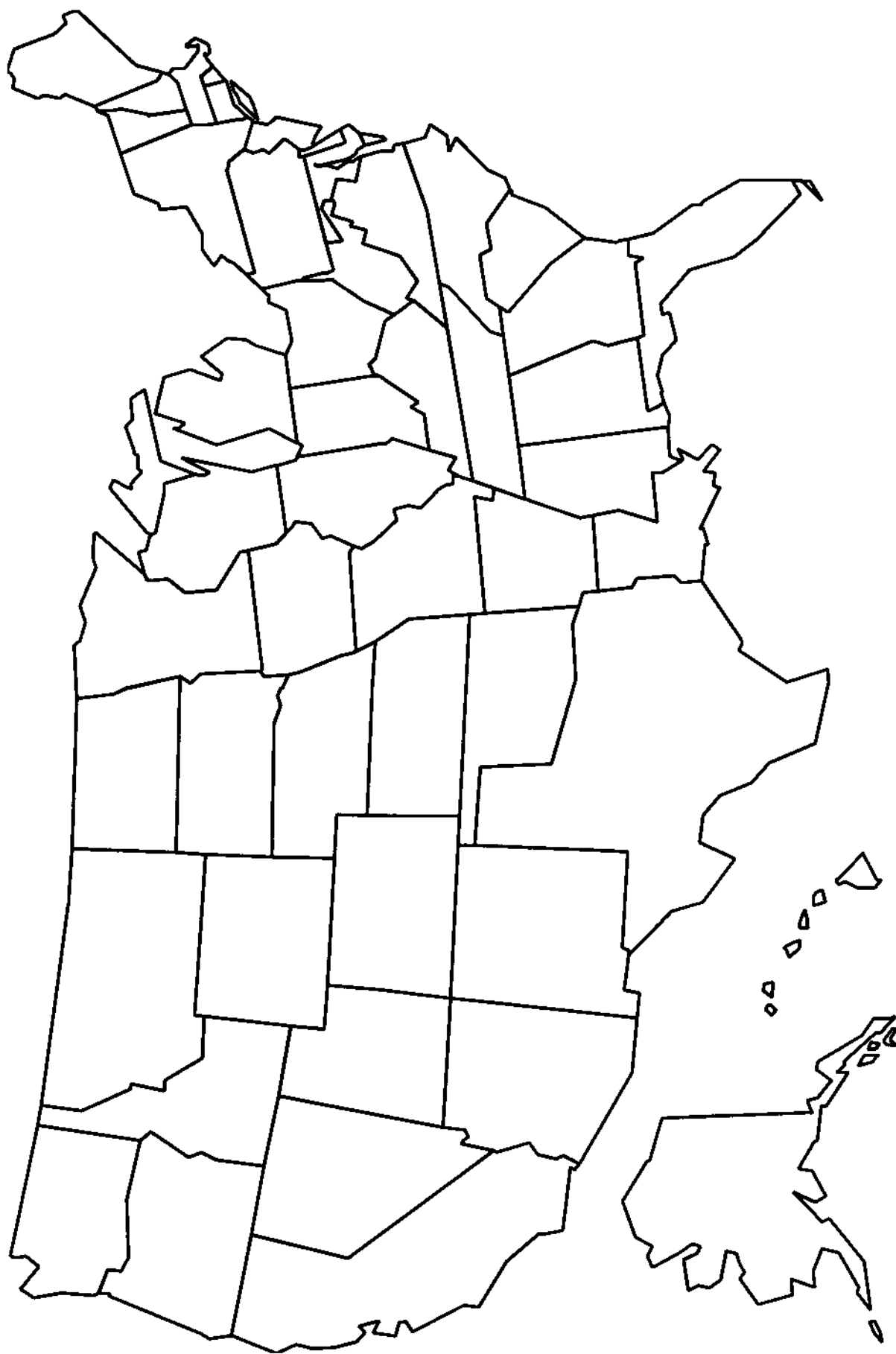
1. Ask students what they think of when they hear about *homesteading*. What are objects, ideas, etc. that they associate with homesteading?
2. Explain that there is a National Park Service site that was set aside because of its relationship to homesteading - Homestead National Monument of America.
3. Introduce students to the location of Homestead National Monument of America using transparencies of the United States, State of Nebraska, and Gage County. Why do they think the monument is located in this area?
4. Point out the location of Homestead National Monument of America in the continental United States and Nebraska. Discuss urban communities that are located in southeast Nebraska and near Homestead National Monument of America. Discuss major roadways and rivers in southeast Nebraska.
5. Distribute copies of the United States map, the Nebraska map, and the Gage County map to every student. Students will label their home city, Homestead National Monument of America, Lincoln, Omaha, and U.S. Highway 77 and Interstate 80.
6. Explain that students will be learning about homesteading. They have an imaginary friend from Homestead National Monument of America who will journey with them as they discover information about homesteading. This friend will share some of his experiences with them. Introduce Claimsey to the students. Students will not be given a picture or image of Claimsey. It is hoped that students will visualize for themselves what Claimsey looks like.

**WHO IS CLAIMSEY?**

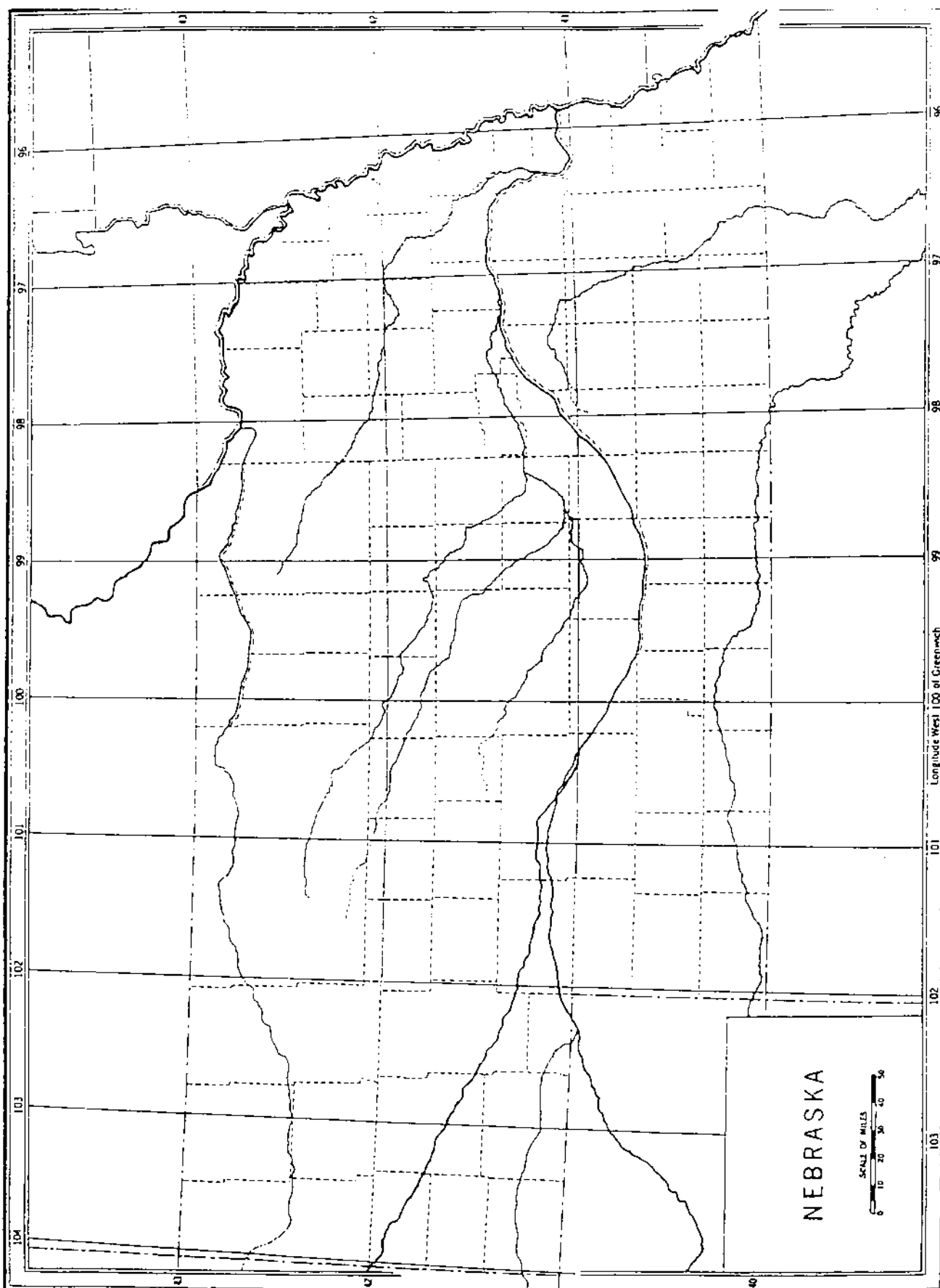
Claimsey is their companion from Homestead National Monument of America. Claimsey, as he is affectionately known, is an average homesteader and received his name based on the

Homestead Act of 1862. Claimsey represents those who filed claims under this act.

**An Exploring Experience:** Have students talk to or interview their family members to see if any relatives of theirs homesteaded. Where did they homestead? Where did they move from? What are some stories of homesteading? Have students share experiences with the class.

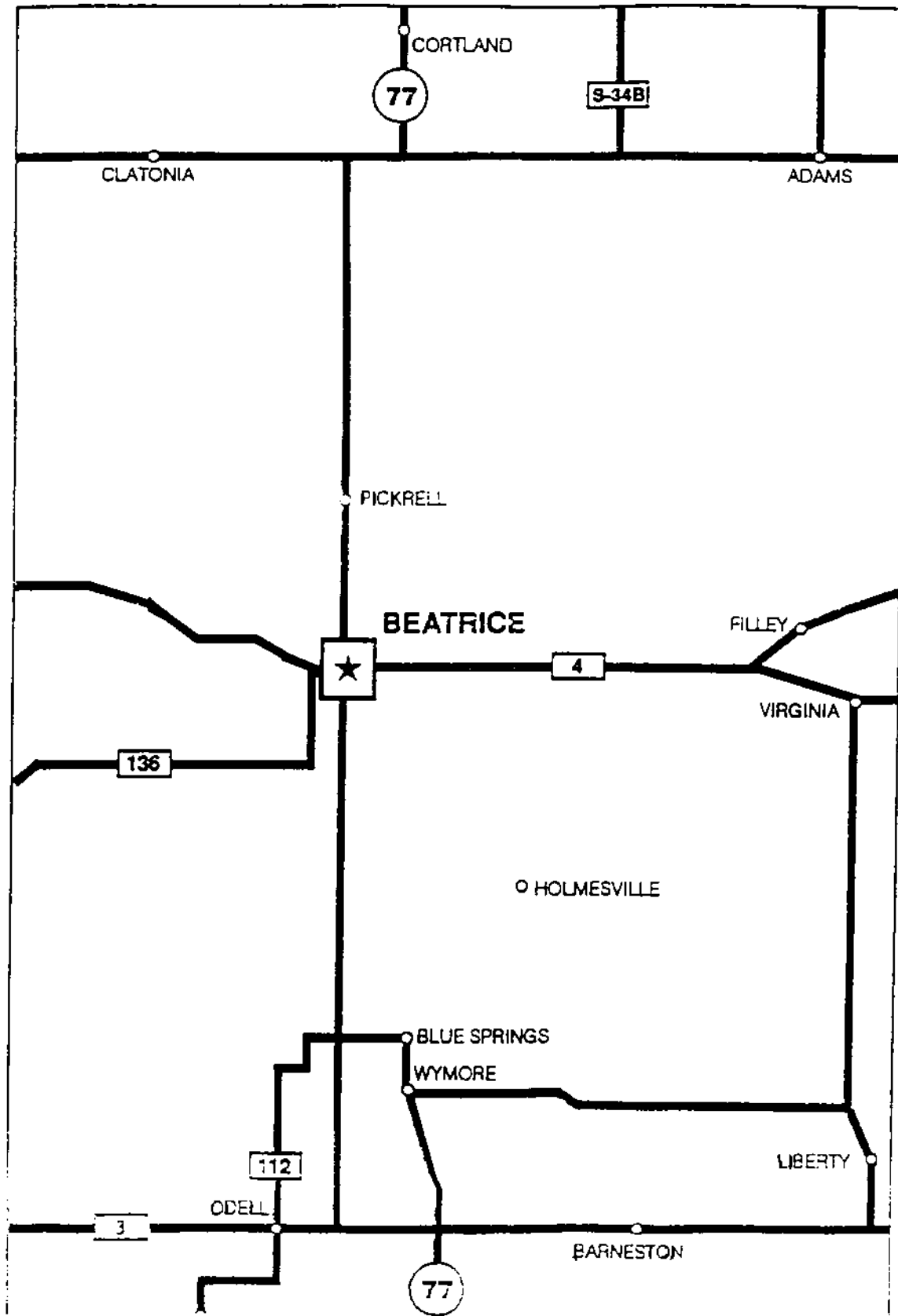


**United States of America**



NEBRASKA  
Scale Miles  
0 10 20 30 40 50  
Longitude West 100 of Greenwich  
D 126  
A. J. Neumann  
Chicago

# Gage County, Nebraska



## Activity 3

### Homestead Search

**Theme:**

Many objects have importance to homesteading and are on display at the Homestead National Monument of America.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to locate 10 objects at the monument and describe the importance of 5 items.

**Materials Needed:** Activity Sheet: Homestead Search

**Subject:** social studies, science

**Skills:** locating, reading, labeling, analyzing

**Methods:** This is a "scavenger hunt" conducted at Homestead National Monument of America. Students will be given a list of items to locate at the monument. These significant items relate to homesteading life and assist students in understanding the purpose of the monument.

1. Give students the Activity Sheet: Homestead Search.
2. Instruct students that they must locate the items listed on the sheet and write down the use or importance of the object.
3. You may have them work in groups, pairs, or individually to complete the worksheet. You may want to have students complete only 10 out of 15 items.
4. Have students meet together to discuss what they saw, and their views on the uses and importance of the items.

**Adapt to classroom use:** Use line drawings and pictures with brief descriptions of the items. Include other appropriate items in addition to those items on the list. Place the items throughout the room and have students search for the items.

**An Exploring Experience:** Have groups research the use of particular historic objects and present written reports to the class.

# **HOMESTEAD SEARCH**

## **ACTIVITY SHEET**

### **ITEMS TO LOCATE**

1. ADZ
2. GRASSHOPPER MODEL PLOW
3. SCHOOL BELL
4. CLOTHES STOMPER
5. COLD ROLLER MANGLE
6. BUCKBOARD
7. SODCUTTER
8. LOG CABIN
9. SLEIGH
10. GOLDENROD (seasonal)
11. FREEMAN CABIN SITE
12. BRICK HOUSE SITE
13. OLD STATE CAPITAL STONE
14. SQUATTERS CABIN SITE
15. CUB CREEK

### **USE OR IMPORTANCE OF ITEM**

# **HOMESTEAD HISTORY**

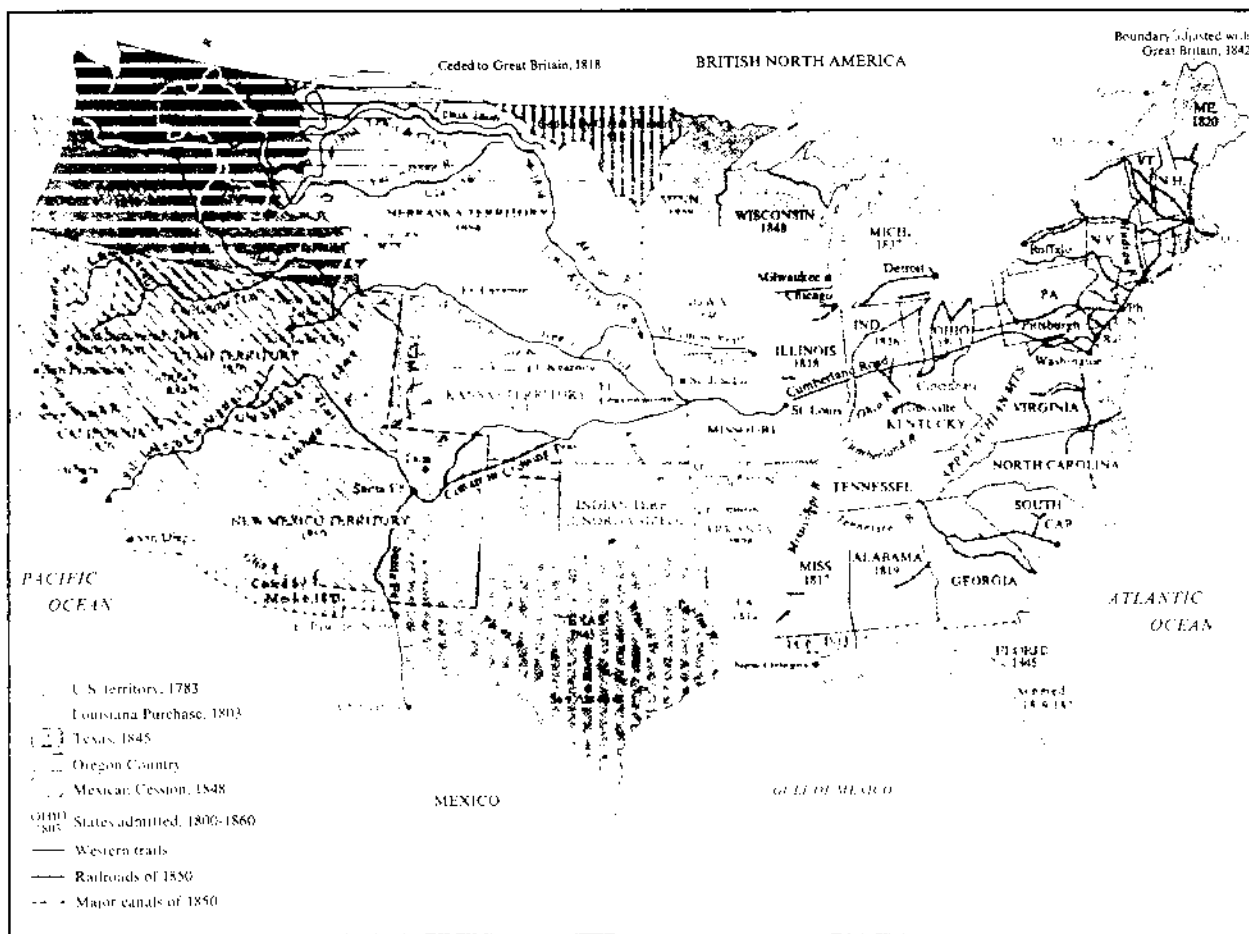


Land Office in Sedgwick County, Kansas, October 1873. Illustration Courtesy of Kansas State Historical Society.

## **Unit Two**

# Homestead History

## UNIT TWO



Westward Expansion, 1800-1860. Mary Beth Norton, et al., *A People and A National. A History of the United States*, Brief Edition, Fourth Edition Copyright © 1996 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Reprinted with permission.

The following is background information for creating lesson plans. Activities start on page 23.

### Homestead History

The cry went out in 1862, "Free Land for all who want it!" From the late 1800's through 1934, people came from the eastern United States and Europe to the Great Plains to start new lives, staking their hopes and dreams on a claim for land. What they found was an ancient landscape of deep prairie grasses and unpredictable rain fall. The free land they claimed, came at a high cost not just to themselves, but to the native people already living in the vast sea of grass. The native

prairie itself was dramatically obliterated. Whole ways of life changed, some for better and some for worse, but always at a high "cost."

### Why "Free Land"

In 1803, with the acquisition of the Louisiana Purchase and additional lands, the United States doubled in size leaving the government with ownership of millions of acres of land. When people moved West to settle these areas, they bypassed the interior, the "Great American Desert" as they called it, and continued to the coastal areas where they expected to acquire rich land for farming. Much of the prairie land east of the Missouri

River had been claimed under the Pre-Emption Act of 1841. This act allowed settlers to purchase 160-acres of land from the government for \$1.25 an acre.

Starting as early as 1824, the idea of giving land away had a voice in Congress. Soon citizens began to express, "Uncle Sam is rich enough to give us all a farm." The idea of free land for the common person began. The vast interior was largely unsettled at least in the eyes of the government. American Indians, who were considered nomadic, were seen as not utilizing the land. The United States government wanted to see citizens settled in the interior territories to increase the wealth of the nation. As Andrew Johnson, a Missouri Senator,

## FINAL HOMESTEAD ENTRIES

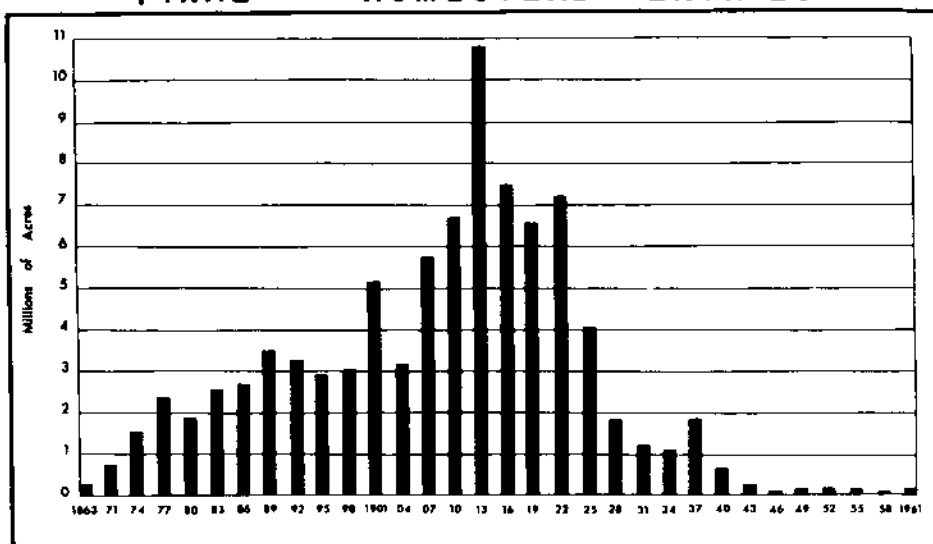


Chart by Bureau of Land Management

stated "... take one of these men, transplant him in the west upon 160 acres of fat, virgin soil, and in a few years ... you increase his ability to buy a great deal."

As the Civil War loomed closer, many other factors pushed the government into offering free land, including one of the strongest issues in Congress. The conflict over land increased between the South and North with such laws as the Missouri Compromise and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. The South wanted to give the new territories and states the option of becoming slave areas; while the North wanted free states. The South, afraid of losing its voting power in Congress, did not want the new areas to be anti-slavery and opposed every new act that would give land away. As Galusha Grow, the father of the Homestead Act, stated "... why should not the legislation of the country be so changed as to prevent for the future the evils of land monopoly, by setting apart the vast and unoccupied territories of the Union and consecrating them forever in free homes for free men."

The coming of the Civil War assured passage of the Homestead Act. With the secession of the Southern states, there were few left in Congress to oppose the idea. On May 20, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln by signing into law the Homestead Act, became the

### GLOSSARY

**Acre** - a measure of land, 160 square rods or 4,840 square yards

**Claimant** - a person claiming right or title to a piece of land

**Homestead claim** - a piece of land granted to an individual under the Homestead Act of 1862

**Homesteader** - an individual who claimed a piece of land under the Homestead Act of 1862

**Locator** - a person who assisted others in finding a piece of land to homestead

**Patent and title** - an official document transferring a piece of land from one individual to another, or from the government to an individual

**Proving Up** - a way to establish that an individual had met the conditions of the Homestead Act of 1862

champion of the free land idea.

## The Homestead Act of 1862

The Homestead Act of 1862, gave 160-acres of land away to individuals who met certain requirements. In order to file a claim, an individual had to be 21 years of age or older and be the head of their family. This vagueness in the wording allowed women to file claims and own land. The act also required a person to be a citizen of the United States or declare intention to gain citizenship. This allowed many European immigrants to stake claims as well. Many railroads and western towns sent representatives to European countries to entice people to move to the United States. These representatives showed pictures of beautiful towns with tree-lined streets and rich soil for farming. The applicant of a claim had to file an affidavit with the local land office stating they met the conditions required by the law. At this time, the *claimant* would pay a fee of \$12 for filing the paperwork.

Once the filing was complete, there were additional requirements to meet in order to receive the *patent* and *title* to the land. A person had to build a home, live on the land, make the land his/her permanent residence, and work the land for a period of 5 years.

Many people who came to claim land paid for the services of a *locator*. This person would assist them in finding an unclaimed tract of land. Many locators showed individuals land near their own claim in order to "settle" the country and have neighbors nearby.

*Subscribed and sworn to before me this 1st day of September 1869, at the County of Brown, State of Missouri.*  
*My commission expires the 1st day of September 1870.*  
*Witness my hand and the seal of my office this 1st day of September 1869.*  
*Notary Public for the State of Missouri.*  
*Wm. H. Thompson*  
*Notary Public*

Daniel Freeman's proving up form.

witnesses had to state they had known the homesteader for 5 years, knew the claimant

had built a home on the land, and knew the claimant had tilled and worked so many acres of land for crops. With witnesses in tow, a claimant would proceed to the land office to "prove up," paying another small filing fee of \$6 and having both witnesses sign the final documents. Afterwards, the claimant would receive a final certificate or patent to the land, having met all the conditions.

## Homestead History at the Park

In the wee hours of the morning, on January 1, 1863, Daniel Freeman filed his *homestead claim* at the Brownsville Land Office on the Missouri River. His claim is considered to be one of the first

homestead claims filed under the Homestead Act of 1862. On the same day, thirty people in eleven states/territories filed claims, many of them in the early hours of the morning. On September 1, 1869, Daniel Freeman received the patent to his land, making him one of the first patent recipients.

*Subscribed and sworn to before me this 1st day of January 1863, at the County of Brown, State of Missouri.*

*I, Daniel Freeman of the County of Brown, State of Missouri, do hereby apply to the Commissioner of the General Land Office, at Washington, D.C., for a grant of 160 acres of land under the Homestead Act of 1862, to wit: the land described as follows: Section 36, Township 33 North, Range 10 West, 4th Principal Meridian, State of Missouri.*

*I declare that I am a citizen of the United States, and that I have never before received a grant of land under the Homestead Act of 1862.*

*Witness my hand and the seal of my office this 1st day of January 1863.*  
*Notary Public for the State of Missouri.*  
*Wm. H. Thompson*

Daniel Freeman's land claim form

## Activity 1

### Homestead History, Why "Free Land"

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**Theme:**

The U.S. government gave away 270 million acres of land in the West in order to get people to settle in this area. To do this, they came up with the idea of giving land away for "free."

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to state one reason why the government came up with the idea of "free land."

**Materials Needed:**

Map: U.S. in 1860, individual maps for students, coloring pencils

**Subject:** social studies, geography

**Skills:** mapping, critical thinking

**Methods:** Through a mapping activity, students will be able to see that in 1860, most of the land west of the Missouri River was not owned by U.S. citizens.

1. Show a map of the U.S. in 1860 and explain the location of where U.S. citizens lived. Be sure to show students that U.S. citizens lived on the west coast (Oregon, California, and Washington) and east of the Missouri River.
2. Explain that in 1803 President Thomas Jefferson bought the middle section of the U.S. from the country of France. This was called the Louisiana Purchase. Ask students if they remember what this area was called by early explorers: "The Great American Desert."
3. Break students into groups. Hand out maps. Have students draw the following on the map (remind students to make a key): Missouri River, Mississippi River, Oregon & California Trails
4. Have students color in the Great American Desert and the areas where very few U.S. citizens lived (mainly the Great Plains and the Western U.S.).
5. Gather students into a large group and talk about what they discovered through the mapping activity.
6. Explain that by the time Abraham Lincoln was President, the government wanted to see people live in these unpopulated areas. The government did not feel that the American Indians were improving the land.
7. Ask students the question, how does a government get people to move to an area where few people live? Lead students to the concept of "free land."
8. Explain about the Homestead Act of 1862. This was the act that gave people 160 acres of free land to entice them to move west. The students will be learning more about this in later activities.

**An Exploring Experience:** Have students contact the local land office and see if they can get free land from the government today.

## Activity 2

### Stake Your Claim

**Theme:**

Staking a claim and living on that claim was often challenging for homesteaders.

**Objective:**

1. Students will be able to decide on a homestead claim and give one reason why that flag was chosen.
2. Students will be able to name one thing a homesteader had to do in order to keep a claim and one disaster a homesteader had to overcome.

**Materials:** colored flags and matching arm bands, disaster scenario cards

**Subject:** social studies, geography

**Skills:** critical thinking & brainstorming

**Methods:** At Homestead National Monument of America, students will experience staking a claim by hearing about the different types of claims, locating a claim, and explaining why they chose that claim.

1. Gather students together and explain that they will be locating a homestead claim on the prairie. Each flag they see represents a homestead claim.
2. Explain to students that the different colors of the flags represent whether the land has water, timber, is flat or hilly. Blue flags have water and timber. Yellow flags have water and no timber. Red flags have no water and no timber. Green flags mean the land is hilly and white flags mean the land is flat. Example: Each flag will have two colors on it: one representing timber and water, and the other representing hilly or flat land.
3. Split students into twos or threes with no more than 15 groups total. Explain that in their groups, students must decide which flag on the prairie they are going to choose for their homestead claim. Remind them that each colored flag represents something different. They need to decide which flag would be right for them to homestead.
4. Groups need to locate their flag and then put on arm bands attached to the flag they choose. Every group must have a flag and each member must have an arm band.
5. Gather students together. Explain the flag colors again.
6. Have students explain why they chose their homestead.
7. Have students in each group decide what they would have to do in order to receive title to the land.
8. Discuss proving up on a homestead and what the Homestead Act required the claimant to do in order to receive title to a homestead claim. Homesteaders had to have 2 witnesses that knew the claimant for 5 years and could say the claimant had built a home, planted crops or improved the land, and lived on the land for 5 years.

Ask students why these rules existed for homesteaders to prove up on their homestead? (Teacher Note: The requirements were part of the Homestead Act). Why did a homesteader have to have two witnesses? (This was the verification aspect of the act. People had to prove they had

met the requirements).

9. Ask why people might not have succeeded on a homestead? What circumstances might have kept them from completing the five years and proving up?
10. Handout the 15 disaster cards, 1 to each group. This card represents a disaster or hardship homesteaders might have encountered while establishing their claim. Ask what the students would do when faced with this disaster or hardship? (Teacher Note: there are no correct answers to these questions. The answers are just to get students to think about the disasters and hardships). How would it affect them and their homestead claims? Share with the group your disaster/hardship and the effects.
11. Have students decide whether to stay on their homestead claim or return east based on what their homestead claim proved and the disaster they encountered. Explain to the students that many people came out west to homestead, but not everyone stayed as some people returned east. (Teacher note: Relate this back to the disasters that homesteaders faced) Ask students if they would be willing to endure these hardships and stay on their claim; or would they want to return to the east.

**Adapt to classroom use:** Use colors to represent the different claims and have students complete the above activity in the classroom or playground.

**An Exploring Experience:** Have students research hardships in different environmental settings in other countries. Have students share their findings with the class.

## Activity 3

### Filing a Claim

**Theme:**

In order to own land, filing a claim was an important first step for homesteaders.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to describe the process of filing a homestead claim.

**Materials Needed:** Land Claim Forms, Land Ledger Sheet, Land Cards #1

**Subject:** social studies

**Skills:** writing

**Methods:** Students will learn how to file a claim under the Homestead Act through the process of a discovery "game."

1. Ask the students if they remember Abraham Lincoln. Explain that when he was president he passed a very important law that encouraged people to move. This bill was called the Homestead Act of 1862.
2. Explain to the students that as they pretend to be homesteaders, they will be filing a claim for land under this act. Read Claimsey's experience filing his claim.

Claimsey: When I lived back East, I heard there was free land out West, just ripe for the taking. As I didn't own any land, and worked long and hard as a blacksmith, I decided that this was my opportunity to make a new life for myself and my family. So I packed up, leaving my family behind and headed west. When I got to the Nebraska Territory, I found a nice piece of land with the help of a locator. I decided this is where I wanted to stake my claim. The land was flat and the soil was rich, just right for farming; but there were only two trees. I knew this was the place. I went to the nearest land office which was 40 miles away and filed my claim with the land agent there. Now, I understand that you newcomers here have found some land that you need to file on. Well, this is what you need to do. Go to the land agent and state your need to file a claim. Oh, and you'll need twelve dollars. That's not for the land, but for all the paperwork that filing creates, or at least that's what they say.

3. Hand out the land cards #1 to each student. As with most homesteaders, they had no idea what they would encounter while establishing a claim. This is the way it should be with students.
4. Explain to students that they have to come to you, the land agent to file their claim. They must read their land card to see what they have on their land. Some cards will tell students they need to wait before they go to the land office because they do not have enough money to file a claim.
5. Have students line up to fill out land claim forms. Pull out the Land Ledger sheet. You need to record each person's name and land section (card number) on the ledger after they have filled out a land claim form. But first, ask each student if:
  1. They are over 21 and head of their household?
  2. They are citizens? If yes, where did they live before? If no, are they planning on becoming citizens? What country did they come from?

3. Do they know what is required of them to obtain title to the land? If yes, have them sign the form. If no, tell them they have to live on the land for five years, build a house and work the land.
4. Do they have the twelve dollars needed to file? Have them show you their land card. If yes, they may sit down. If no, they need to return later when they have the money.
6. Have students fill out the land claim form. Wish them good luck and you hope to see them in five years.
7. After all students have completed the activity, ask them what they learned. Tell them to write their name on their land card and return it to you. They will be doing more with their land in later activities.

**An Exploring Experience:** Have students ask relatives if anyone in the family owns a homestead or filed a claim on one. Then have students in the groups contact the National Archives requesting information on the claim. The National Archives will need to know the state, approximate year, and general location of the land claim in order to do a search for information. The National Archives address is Suitland Reference Branch (NNRR), Textual Reference Division, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. 20409.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #1**

You are single, 21 years old, and a U.S. citizen. With \$12.00 in your pocket, you have come West from the Ohio Valley Region to have your own farm.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #2**

You are 21 years old, a U.S. Citizen, and head of your family. You have come West from South Carolina with \$12.00 to file a claim.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #3**

You are not a citizen of the U.S., but are 25 years old, and single. You left your native country of Germany to own land. You have \$18.00.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #4**

You are 27 years old, head of your family, and not a citizen of the U.S. You left your native country of Ireland with \$10. You must earn \$2 dollars. Wait five minutes before filing a claim.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #5**

You left Upstate New York with \$19.00. You are 30 years old, head of your family, and a citizen of the U.S.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #6**

You are 30 years old, a U.S. citizen, and head of your family. You left the state of Georgia with \$10.00 to come West. You must earn \$2 dollars. Wait five minutes before filing a claim.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #7**

You are a single U.S. citizen who is 21 years old. With \$12.00, you left Boston, Massachusetts to come West.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #8**

You left your native country of Scotland with \$13.00. You are single and 23 years old.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #9**

You are 24 years old, head of your family, and not a U.S. citizen. You left Czechoslovakia, your native land with \$15.00

**Land Card #1  
Claim #10**

You are a U.S. citizen, 33 years old, and head of your family. You left the state of Kentucky with \$9.00 in your pocket. You must earn \$3 dollars. Wait seven minutes before filing a claim.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #11**

You are 22 years old, head of your family, and not a U.S. citizen. You left your native country, Sweden with \$5.00. You must earn \$7. Wait ten minutes before filing a claim.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #12**

You are head of your family, 23 years old, and a U.S. citizen. You left the state of Virginia with \$20.00 in your pocket to come West.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #13**

You are a 25 year old U.S. citizen who is single. You left the state of Maryland with \$11.00. You must earn \$1. Wait two minutes before filing a claim.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #14**

You are 26 years old, head of your family, and not a U.S. citizen. You left your native country of Italy with \$14.00.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #15**

You are single, 22 years old, and not a U.S. citizen. With \$22.00, you left your home in Quebec, Canada to go West.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #16**

You are 37 years old, head of your family, and not a citizen of the U.S. You left your home in Germany with \$13.00.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #17**

You are head of your family, 25 years old, and not a U.S. citizen. With \$12.00 in your pocket, you left your home in Poland.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #18**

You left your home in the state of Missouri with \$10.00. You are 32 years old, single, and a U.S. citizen. You must earn \$2. Wait five minutes before filing a claim.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #19**

You are single, 25 years old, and not a U.S. citizen. You left your native country of Ireland with \$21.00.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #20**

You are 21 years old, single, and not a citizen of the U.S. You left your home in France with \$30.00.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #21**

You are 28 years old, head of your family, and not a U.S. citizen. You left your native country of England with \$15.00.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #22**

You are 30 years old, single, and not a citizen of the U.S. You left your home in Germany with \$13.00.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #23**

You are head of your family, 31 years old, and a U.S. citizen. You left your home in Tennessee with \$9.00. You must earn \$3. Wait six minutes before filing a claim.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #24**

You are 28 years old, head of your family, and not a citizen of the U.S. You left your native country of Romania with \$12.00.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #25**

You are 29 years old, single, and not a U.S. citizen. You left your home in Ireland with \$14.00 to come to America.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #26**

You are 22 years old, single, and a U.S. citizen from the state of West Virginia. You have \$28.00 in your pocket.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #27**

You are 23 years old, head of your family, and a citizen of the U.S. You left your home in Pennsylvania with \$19.00.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #28**

You are a 26 year old U.S. citizen who is single. You left the state of Mississippi with \$21.00 in your pocket.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #29**

You are 31 years old, head of your family, and a U.S. citizen. You left the state of Illinois with \$13.00.

**Land Card #1  
Claim #30**

You are 26 years old, single, and not a citizen of the U.S. You left your native country of Bulgaria with \$16.00.

## LAND LEDGER FORM

**REGISTER OF ENTRIES** made at the Land Office at

under the H

from the

day of

to the

day of

the same month, inclusive

[illegible]

LAND CLAIM FORM

LAND OFFICE, \_\_\_\_\_, 18\_\_\_\_

No. \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name) of \_\_\_\_\_ county Nebraska Territory.

Do here by apply to enter under the provisions of the act of Congress approved May 20th, 1862 entitled an act to secure Homesteads to actual settlers on the Public Domain.

\_\_\_\_\_ (location) containing 160 acres. Having filed my Pre-Emption Declaration there to on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ (month, year).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Land Office at:

LAND OFFICE, \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

I \_\_\_\_\_ (land agent name) Registrar of the Land Office do Hereby certify that the above application is for surveyed lands of the class which the applicant is legally entitled to enter under the Homestead Act of May 20th, 1862 and that there is no prior valid adverse right to the land.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Land Registrar

## Activity 4

### Proving Up

**Theme:**

Filing a claim was only the first step. The final step in acquiring a piece of land under the Homestead Act of 1862 was "proving up" that you had met the conditions set out by the act.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will understand and name the three things that a homesteader had to do to prove that the title of the land belonged to him or her.

**Materials Needed:** Proving Up Form, Land Cards #2

**Subject:** social studies

**Skills:** writing, locating, filling out forms

**Methods:** Students will continue the discovery activity they started by filing a claim by proving up.

1. Hand back to the students the land cards #1. Explain to them that it has been five years since they filed on their piece of land and it's time to get the patent or title of the land. They have to prove up.
2. Ask students what they think "prove up" means. Ask them if they remember what they had to do under the Homestead Act, had to . . . build a house, live on the land for five years, and work the land. Ask students how the government would know that the homesteader had met these requirements when there were not a lot of people around.
3. Explain to students that in order to "prove up" they had to get two witnesses to sign a sheet of paper stating that they had built a house, lived on the land for five years, and worked the land.
4. Explain that Claimsey had difficulties finding two witnesses when he went to prove up. Ask the students what they think his difficulties were? Read Claimsey's story.

Claimsey: When my five years had passed, it came time for me to prove up on my claim. I had a rough time of it. My claim was far away from other homesteads and most of the people that lived near me had only been there a couple of years. Most of the homesteaders that were there when I staked my claim, had left their claims and returned to the East. I had to find someone willing to sign my form saying I had lived on my claim for five years. Finally, I got Rick Thomas about five miles from me to sign as he had been on his claim a year before me. He was willing to go to the land office with me and sign the paper as a witness. I went into town twelve miles away to the postmaster's office and came upon James Capper. He was willing to go with Rick Thomas and me to sign my proving up paper as I had signed his the year before. We rode over to the land agent's office. The agent made Rick Thomas and James Capper swear they had known me for the five years past, that I was head of my household, had built a sod house, and had plowed 25 acres of my land for wheat and corn crops. The land agent questioned them and had them sign the proving paper. Rick Thomas couldn't read so he signed with an "X." The agent wrote his name. Everything worked out all right, but I had a nervous time of it. Told Rick Thomas and James Capper, I appreciated their help and to stop by my place sometime for supper.

5. Give students the land card #2 that relates to their first land card. You may want to attach their first land card to their new land card before you pass them back. This new card tells them how long they have lived on their land, if they built a house, and if they worked the land. Students need to find two people in the room who have been on their land as long as they have or longer. Students should ask those students to sign as witnesses. Students need to take their witnesses to the teacher who is the land agent in order to prove up.

**An Exploring Experience:** Have students write a letter via mail to the National Archives for a copy of a proving up form. Have students write to the local county office to see what present land deeds look like.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #1**

You filed your claim in 1916 and built a house. You worked 16 acres from 1917 to 1923 and planted corn and wheat.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #2**

You filed your claim in 1902 and built a house. You worked your land from 1903-1908, planting 10 acres of wheat.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #3**

You filed your claim in 1892 and built a house. You plowed 13 acres of wheat and barley between 1893-1898.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #4**

You filed your claim in 1868 and built a house. You worked your land between 1868-1873, planting 20 acres of corn and wheat.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #5**

After filing your claim in 1908, you built a house. You planted 10 acres of corn between 1909-1914.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #6**

You filed your claim in 1869 and built a house. You plowed 19 acres, planting corn and barley.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #7**

After filing your claim in 1907, you built a house. You worked your land between 1908-1913, planting 14 acres of corn and wheat.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #8**

You filed your claim in 1880 and built a house. You plowed 12 acres of land and planted wheat between 1880-1887.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #9**

You filed your claim in 1917 and built a house. You worked your land from 1919-1925, planting 10 acres of corn.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #10**

After filing your claim in 1883, you built your house. You plowed 12 acres of land between 1883-1889, planting corn and barley.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #11**

You filed your claim in 1902 and built a house. You worked your land from 1902-1908, planting 17 acres of corn and wheat.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #12**

After filing your claim in 1872, you built a house. You plowed 22 acres of land between 1872-1877, planting wheat.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #13**

You filed your claim in 1905 and built a house. You plowed 23 acres between 1905-1911, planting wheat and corn.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #14**

After filing your claim in 1919, you built a house. Between 1919-1925, you plowed 19 acres and planted corn.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #15**

In 1903, you filed your claim and built a house. You plowed 20 acres of land between 1903-1909, planting corn and barley.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #16**

In 1894, you filed your claim and built a house. You worked your land from 1894-1899. You plowed 20 acres and planted corn, wheat, and barley.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #17**

You filed your claim in 1913 and built a house. You plowed 16 acres and planted corn and wheat between 1913-1920.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #18**

In 1880, you filed your claim and built a house. Between 1880-1885, you plowed 15 acres and planted wheat.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #19**

After filing your claim in 1872, you built a house. You plowed 40 acres of land between 1873-1879. You planted corn and wheat.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #20**

You filed your claim in 1910 and built a house. Between 1910-1915, you plowed 11 acres of land and planted corn and wheat.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #21**

In 1896, you filed your claim and built a house. You worked your land between 1897-1902, planting corn.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #22**

You filed your claim in 1885 and built a house. Between 1886-1891, you plowed 22 acres, planting corn.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #23**

You filed your claim in 1891 and built a house. You plowed 10 acres between 1891-1896, planting corn.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #24**

In 1918, you filed your claim and built your house. You worked your land between 1918-1923, plowing 15 acres and planting wheat.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #25**

You filed your claim in 1875 and built a house. Between 1876-1882, you plowed 15 acres and planted wheat.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #26**

In 1899, you filed your claim and built a house. Between 1900-1906, you plowed 19 acres of land and planted corn.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #27**

In 1910, you filed your claim and built a house. Working your land between 1910-1916, you plowed 30 acres and planted corn and wheat.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #28**

You filed your claim in 1901 and built a house. You plowed 28 acres of land between 1902-1907, planting wheat and barley.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #29**

You filed your claim in 1884 and built a house. You plowed 13 acres of land between 1884-1889. You planted corn and wheat.

**Land Card #2  
Claim #30**

In 1920, you filed your claim and built a house. Between 1920-1926, you plowed 16 acres of land, planting corn and barley.

PROVING UP FORM

PROOF REQUIRED UNDER HOMESTEAD ACTS MAY 20, 1862, and JUNE 21, 1866.

We, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of witness 1) and  
\_\_\_\_\_ (name of witness 2) do solemnly swear

that we have known \_\_\_\_\_ (claimant's name) for over five  
years last past; that he

is the head of a family consisting of \_\_\_\_\_ and  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ and is a citizen of the United States; that he is an inhabitant

of the \_\_\_\_\_ of section No. \_\_\_\_\_ in

Township No. \_\_\_\_\_ of Range No. \_\_\_\_\_ and that no other  
person resided upon the

said land entitled to the right of Homestead or Pre-emption.

That the said \_\_\_\_\_ entered upon and made  
settlement on said land on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and has  
built a house thereon  
(Type of house) \_\_\_\_\_

and has lived in the said house and made it his exclusive home from the \_\_\_\_\_ (original date)  
day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, to the present time, and that he has  
since said settlement plowed, fenced, and cultivated about \_\_\_\_\_ acres of said land and has  
made the following improvements thereon, to wit:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby certify that the above affidavit was  
taken and subscribed before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Registrar

WE CERTIFY that \_\_\_\_\_ and  
\_\_\_\_\_ whose names are subscribed to the foregoing affidavit,  
are persons of respectability.

\_\_\_\_\_, Registrar.

\_\_\_\_\_, Receiver.

# **PRAIRIE BALANCE**



## **Unit Three**

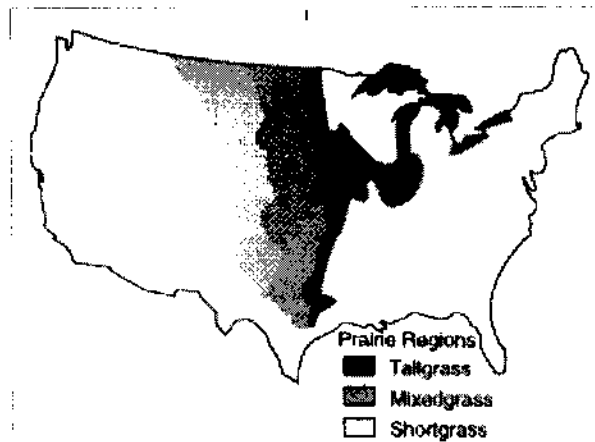
## Prairie Balance UNIT THREE

The following is background information for creating lesson plans. Activities start on page 43.

### The Prairie and Grasslands of North America

Seventy percent of original American grassland areas were formed on deposits created by glacial ice, lakes, streams and wind. These deposits laid down soil bases heavy with various minerals and loess that were ideally suited for nurturing the beginnings of a grassland.

The rain shadow effect has a great influence on the Great Plains. This effect is due to the rising of the mountain systems in the western United States (Sierra Nevada, Great Basin Ranges, and Rocky Mountains). Water-laden clouds from the Pacific Ocean are forced to great heights by the mountains. There the clouds cool and condense dropping their load of precipitation as snow or water. As they come down in elevation on the east slope of the mountains, the clouds have very little water to drop. Passing over all three ranges of mountains, this rain shadow effect happens each time, and by the time the clouds pass the Continental Divide, they are wrung dry. The areas near the east side of the mountains received the least amount of rainfall. As the clouds move eastward, they begin to combine with the masses of moist air drifting north from the Gulf of Mexico. The resulting combination creates a renewed mass of moisture laden clouds in the eastern area of the Great Plains like a huge wet sponge waiting to be squeezed dry. This creates the humidity on the eastern plains.



Because of the effect of high humidity, intense heat, and decreased rainfall, the balance of survival tips to plants with a high tolerance for heat and drought. With the decrease in the amount of rainfall, the vegetation in this area of the Great Plains began to change. At first, the area had hardwood trees, and as the rainfall

decreased, softwood trees replaced hardwoods. Eventually, even the softwoods had trouble surviving and grasses replaced the trees. The further away an area was from the mountain systems, the more precipitation the area received. This effect created different types of grasses or prairie systems based on the amount of rainfall received. These different areas are called the tallgrass, mixed or mid grass and short grass prairies. It is here in the plains that the fight for habitat wages between the prairie and trees. The pendulum swings from a cool and moist *climate* which favors trees, to a hot and dry climate which favors grasses. At one point the trees invade into the grassland when it is cooler and moist. At the other point, the grasses invade into the forest when it is hot and dry. This has been ongoing for 25 million years. This might be why there are enclaves of trees in the prairie and prairie/meadows in the forests.

Location	Rainfall	Grass Height	Type
Eastern Colorado	16"/year	6" to 1.5'	Short grass
Central KS/NE	24"/year	2' to 4'	Mixed or Mid grass
Eastern Missouri	30"	over 6'	Tall grass

## The Tallgrass Prairie



By looking at the map of the different prairie areas on the previous page, you can see that the tallgrass prairie is in the eastern area of the Great Plains. The grasses here can reach eight feet by the late summer and early fall. Because of the type of plants growing here, it is especially difficult for tree seedlings to become established in native prairies that have existed thousands of years.

The dense prairie *sod* makes it difficult for any non-native plant to become established. Native prairie plants use all the water in the top six inches of the soil which makes it difficult for the deep root systems of trees to gather water. Most of the rain that comes in the late summer season, never reaches the ground. The precipitation clings as droplets and water film on the leaves and stems of prairie plants. Even in heavy rains only one third of the rain gets to the ground. If you walk through the prairie after a rainstorm, you would get drenching wet from the water left on the plants.

The grasses on the tallgrass prairie are so tall that only one third or less of the sunlight reaches the ground. Tree seedlings get only one percent of the sunlight as most is absorbed by the grasses and other *forbs* on the prairie.

On the prairie, every cubic inch of soil under the surface is compacted by *roots*. For example, in half a square meter of big bluestem sod (the major grass on tallgrass prairies), there are nearly 13 miles of fine root hairs and larger roots.

## Homestead's Restored Tallgrass Prairie

Most of the native prairie sod in the United States was plowed up for farm land by early farmers. There still exist some scattered remnants of native prairie, but they are few. The tallgrass prairie at Homestead National Monument of America is a restored tallgrass prairie. When Congress established the site in 1936, the uplands of the monument were eroded due to continual plowing and the drought of the 1930s. The National Park Service decided to restore the tallgrass prairie to give visitors an idea of what homesteaders found in the "Great American Desert." Parts of the restored prairie are as old as 50 years and some parts are recently planted. The restoration continues and the National Park Service manages this area as a prairie.

### GLOSSARY

**Adaption** - the process of making adjustments to the environment

**Biodiversity** - a variety of different types of life found in an ecosystem

**Climate** - the kind of weather a place has over a period of years, based on conditions of heat and cold, moisture and dryness, sun and shade, wind and calm

**Ecosystem** - a system of ecological relationships upon which the life of any living organism is based which includes such factors as food supply, weather, and natural enemies

**Forbs** - a plant other than a grass or tree

**Grassland** - a region covered with mostly grasses and few trees, also called prairie

**Loess** - a type of soil deposit found in grasslands as a result of prior glacier action

**Roots** - underground part of a plant's body

**Sod** - ground covered with grass, a piece or layer which contains both grass, roots, and soil

## Animals on the Prairie

The original animals of the tallgrass prairie were much more varied than those that can be seen today. The animals and the native plants created an interconnected *ecosystem*. Because of the loss of many native prairie *habitats* and over hunting in the 19th century, the *biodiversity* of animals viewed by the first settlers no longer exists.

It can still be debated whether some of the species we consider to be native to grasslands are recent *adapters* to the prairie or long time residents. In the forested areas, animals tend to travel alone except in the mating season. Herds of animals are really a phenomena of the expansive prairies of the past as is the quick maneuverability and speed of some prairie dwelling animals. On the prairie, we find not only mammals, but a variety of birds, reptiles, and others species which adapted to the life on the Great Plains. Of all the species, the birds tend to be the most diverse and numerous. Here, in the Great Plains, is where the meadowlark, dickcissel, red tailed hawk, prairie chicken, bobolink, sandhill crane,

upland plover, sparrow hawk, swallow-tailed kit, bobwhite quail, great curlew, mourning dove, and many more make their homes. The mammals and reptiles of the prairie are the animals that we commonly associate with the western United States; the bison, coyote, antelope, badger, elk, prairie dog, various skunks, otters, foxes, snakes, lizards, among many others. Some have survived and adapted to the changes on the grassland, but many have decreased in number, dependent on the prairie that started to vanish with the tilling of the land.



## Activity 1

### The Prairie Ecosystem

**Theme:**

Throughout the world there are hundreds of species of plants and animals that depend upon the vast grasslands in which they live. The Great Plains of the United States is one of these grasslands although much of the original prairie is gone now. When the ecosystem of a grassland is disturbed, the prairie has to struggle to survive.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to understand that a prairie is a unique and special ecosystem.
2. Students will be able to name two things that help the prairie to function.

**Materials Needed:** Maps: the United States and the World, Material Sheet: Prairie Cards for students, Land, Water, Air Cards for the chairs, one chair for each student (if odd number of students add an extra chair), Tape of songs, tape recorder, Material Sheet: Disasters on the Prairie.

**Subject:** science, geography

**Skills:** comprehension, transposition

**Methods:** Students will learn about the prairie ecosystem by participating in a game similar to musical chairs.

1. Read Claimsey's statement about the prairie.

Claimsey:

When I first came out to the plains, I was very surprised. Back east, they called it the "Great American Desert" - a land where nothing grew or lived except an endless sea of grass. But when I got here, the grasses were just starting to sprout as it was late spring and I could see plants of all types, not just grasses. Several plants were in bloom with pretty flowers that I knew my wife would love. When she arrived with the children, the prairie violets, woodsorrels, and prairie ragworts nearly sold her on the plains. If it weren't for the lack of trees she would have wanted to stay. And the sky, it was huge and went on forever and ever. Just prairie and sky were all I could see. I knew this place was for me, this wild and empty land of sky and prairie. By early fall, the grasses were at their full height. The horses and stock loved to graze the big and little bluestem, the Indian grass, and sideoats. In the wind, you could watch the grass wave gently across like the ocean lapping at the shore - an endless motion of grass and wind. Lately there is getting to be less and less of the tallgrasses as more homesteaders plow the land for their crops.

2. Ask students to define a prairie. Relate it to Claimsey's experience.
3. Tell students about the different types of prairies or grasslands throughout the world. Show a map of the World and point out the following grasslands: African Savannah, Asian Steppes, Australian Outback, and Great Plains of North America. Explain that the Great Plains of North America can be defined into three different types called Tall, Mid/Mix, Short -grass prairies and show where they are located. Use a map of the United States.
4. Explain to students the word "ecosystem" and that we are going to experience the interconnectedness of the ecosystem of the prairie through a game of musical chairs.
5. Line up the chairs into 2 rows back to back. Put the AIR, WATER, LAND CARDS on the front of each chair. Give each student a PRAIRIE CARD. This is the plant or animal they will be during the game.
6. Explain that all the students will have to stand and walk around while a song plays on the tape recorder. When the music stops, the students need to find a chair that has the same word of LAND, AIR, or WATER that is on their prairie

**LAND, AIR AND WATER CARDS**  
**MATERIAL SHEET**

**AIR**

**LAND**

**WATER**

card.

Each PRAIRIE CARD tells the student what they need to survive (LAND, AIR or WATER). This is the first round.

7. Now disasters are going to happen on the prairie that affect the ecosystem. Have students get up and walk around the chairs while the music is playing. You need to read the first disaster from the Material Sheet: Disasters on the Prairie. After reading the disaster, remove the appropriate LAND, WATER or AIR chair. At the end of each disaster description, there is the word LAND, AIR, or WATER. This word tells what chair needs to be removed. Start the music. Stop the music and have the students locate the chair that has the same word as on their prairie cards. One student will be left standing. Explain to students that without (LAND, WATER, or AIR) this prairie species cannot live and so it dies. Continue with each disaster until there is no chair left. You may remove two or more chairs during each disaster if you are short of time. Explain to students that there are no winners when the prairie ecosystem is not in balance.

Variation of the game: Have two rows of chairs facing each other. One row of chairs is the LAND, WATER, and AIR and the other row is the PRAIRIE species. The Prairie species must sit across from the LAND, WATER, or AIR that is on their card. Have some students represent land, water, and air, and the other students represent the prairie species. When the disaster happens, two students will be removed from the game. When the disaster calls for a LAND, WATER, or AIR to disappear, remove a chair from that side and pull a student that has that card from the group. Have students with PRAIRIE Cards sit down across from the LAND, WATER, and AIR students. One student will not have a LAND, WATER, or AIR chair to sit across from and that student that is missing his/her LAND, WATER, or AIR chair must sit out the rest of the game.

Explain to students that the one student left standing cannot survive without the corresponding LAND, WATER, or AIR card, and the student is removed from the game. Continue until no one is left.

**An Exploring Experience:** Divide the class into the following ecosystems: wetlands, old growth forest, rain forest, deserts. Have students send for information on their ecosystem to an organization that deals with what is happening to that ecosystem. Report back to the class their findings.

# PRAIRIE CARDS

## MATERIAL SHEET

<p><b>I am a MEADOW SPITTLEBUG.</b> To protect myself from predators, I cover myself with bubbles made from spit.</p> <p><b>LAND</b></p>	<p><b>I am a GREAT PLAINS TOAD.</b> I come out of my burrow at night to catch insects.</p> <p><b>LAND</b></p>
<p><b>I am a LADY BUG.</b> I eat aphids that attack your roses.</p> <p><b>LAND</b></p>	<p><b>I am a HOGNOSE SNAKE.</b> I play dead like an opossum when threatened.</p> <p><b>LAND</b></p>
<p><b>I am a MOLE.</b> I burrow under ground. I have no visible eyes.</p> <p><b>LAND</b></p>	<p><b>I am a STRIPED SKUNK.</b> I squirt my enemies with a smelly spray.</p> <p><b>LAND</b></p>
<p><b>I am a BROWN DADDY-LONG-LEGS.</b> I am usually harmless, but if you smash me I will stink.</p> <p><b>LAND</b></p>	<p><b>I am a BIG BLUESTEM.</b> Some people call me the king of the prairie.</p> <p><b>LAND</b></p>
<p><b>I am a PRAIRIE ROSE.</b> I am pretty and I smell sweet.</p> <p><b>LAND</b></p>	<p><b>I am a PURPLE-CONE FLOWER.</b> My roots can be used to treat a toothache.</p> <p><b>LAND</b></p>
<p><b>I am a MOSQUITO.</b> I suck the blood of warm-blooded animals and humans.</p> <p><b>AIR</b></p>	<p><b>I am a MEADOWLARK.</b> I sing a cheerful song.</p> <p><b>AIR</b></p>
<p><b>I am a MUD DAUBER.</b> I lay my eggs in cells made of mud.</p> <p><b>AIR</b></p>	<p><b>I am a LIGHTNING BUG.</b> I flash my light on warm summer nights.</p> <p><b>AIR</b></p>

**I am a BALD EAGLE. I live near waterways and feed on fish.**

**AIR**

**I am a BAT. I eat a bunch of bugs every night. I use sonar to fly.**

**AIR**

**I am a MONARCH BUTTERFLY. I fly south in the winter, just like the birds.**

**AIR**

**I am a SHORT-EARED OWL. I have a habit of hovering over the land.**

**AIR**

**I am a RED TAILED HAWK. I hunt from the top of telephone poles.**

**AIR**

**I am a PRAIRIE CHICKEN. I do a dance to attract a mate.**

**AIR**

**I am a CHANNEL CATFISH. My barbs look like a cat's whiskers.**

**WATER**

**I am a BULL FROG. I croak loudly in the spring.**

**WATER**

**I am a MUD PUPPY. I like cool damp places.**

**WATER**

**I am a WATER SMARTWEED plant. I float on top of the water.**

**WATER**

**I am a BEAVER. I change my habitat by building dams to make ponds.**

**WATER**

**I am a FLATHEAD MINNOW. I am just a little fish. Big fish try to catch me and eat me.**

**WATER**

**I am a PAINTED TURTLE. I sun myself on a log.**

**WATER**

**I am a WATER SNAKE. I can swim as fast as a fish.**

**WATER**

**I am a STRIPED CHORUS FROG. My voice is like the sound of a fingernail running over the teeth of a comb.**

**WATER**

**I am a PLAINS KILLFISH. One of my favorite foods is mosquitoes.**

**WATER**

## DISASTERS ON THE PRAIRIE

### MATERIAL SHEET

---

Read each disaster out loud from the list below. The word LAND, WATER, or AIR, follows each disaster to indicate what chair should be removed. Remove the appropriate LAND, WATER, or AIR chair. If short of time, remove several chairs.

1. Every year, acres of tallgrass prairie are plowed to be used as cropland. This destroys much of your habitat area. **LAND**
2. An oil tanker runs off the road and spills 1,000 gallons of oil into the creek where you live. **WATER**
3. Pollution from factories hundreds of miles away can drift into National Park areas like Homestead National Monument of America. **AIR**
4. Joe Careless throws a McDonald's bag out of his car window. **LAND**
5. Joe Careless throws a beer can into your creek. **WATER**
6. A rancher puts too many cattle in your pasture and they graze off all the plant cover. **LAND**
7. Pollution from automobiles and power plants traps heat inside our atmosphere, raising the earth's temperature. **AIR**
8. Every year tons of fertilizer are washed out of crop fields and into your creek. **WATER**
9. On the west side of Lincoln, your 60 acre pasture is paved and turned into a shopping mall. **LAND**
10. A volcano explodes 1000 miles from your home. The ash in the air blocks the sunlight which the plants need to grow. **LAND**
11. Joe Careless disconnects his car's pollution control system. **AIR**
12. Your marsh is drained so the land can be used to grow crops. **WATER**
13. A farmer plows his field to the edge of the creek. This causes increased erosion along the creek and the stream bank collapses. **WATER AND LAND**
14. The highway near your home is widened and removes several acres of your prairie. **LAND**
15. Jolene Careless is smoking a cigarette on your prairie, and throws her cigarette away. The cigarette starts a fire that destroys 1000 acres of prairie before it can be controlled. **LAND**
16. Untreated sewage is dumped into your river, reducing the amount of life supporting oxygen in the water. **WATER**

17. The trees along your creek are cut down so the wood from the trees can be used to make paper. **LAND**
18. Jolene Careless will do anything to be in style. She uses four cans of hair spray each day just to make her bangs stand up. **AIR**
19. A coal company tears up your prairie looking for coal to put in a strip mine in Western Nebraska. **LAND**
20. Chemicals in some refrigerators, air conditioners and Styrofoam destroy the Earth's ozone layer. This layer in the atmosphere protects the Earth from harmful radiation. **AIR**
21. A long drought occurs drying up surface water. **WATER**
22. Just outside of Beatrice, 50 barrels of toxic waste are illegally dumped in your meadow. **LAND**
23. A nuclear power plant leaks radioactive material into your air. **AIR**
24. A dam is built on the Big Blue River, drying up much of the downstream flow. **WATER**
25. A dam is built on the Big Blue River. The water backs up behind the dam and floods your valley. **LAND**
26. Tropical rainforests, which produce much of the world's oxygen, are being cut down at a very fast rate. **AIR**
27. Pesticides from a crop duster plane drift on the wind. **AIR**

## Activity 2

### Root Systems of Prairie Plants

**NOTE THE PLANTS FOR THIS ACTIVITY NEED TO GROW OVER A FIVE-WEEK PERIOD!**

**Theme:**

Prairie plants have root systems that are tough and intertwined. This root system helps in creating sod that holds together.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to understand the root structure of several native prairie grasses and plants.
2. Students will be able to explain how the roots hold the soil together creating sod.

**Materials Needed:** glass aquarium or glass bowl, potting soil, grass or native plant seeds, water, and a source of light.

**Subject:** science

**Skills:** observation, transposition

**Methods:** The students will conduct an experiment with native prairie seeds to observe the sod of a prairie. This experience will show students how roots grow and deepen. Student will be able to observe by watching the roots grow through a glass aquarium or glass bowl.

1. Ask students why they feel roots are important to plants and soil. Explain to students that the function of roots is to get moisture and nutrients from the soil to "feed" the plant. Roots are an important part of the plant's survival. On the prairie, roots of different plants grow to different depths in order to "share" the nutrients and moisture.
2. Get two bags of potting soil or another type of soil and put 8-10 inches in an aquarium or glass container.
3. Plant various grass and plant (also called forbs) seeds in the direct sunlight no more than 1 inch from the side of the glass. Some seeds may be planted in the middle of the container, but be sure some seeds are near the side in order to watch the roots grow.
4. Assign students to water these plants once or twice a week and to monitor their growth for the class.
5. At the end of five weeks, these plants should have grown sufficiently to have a root structure that will be observable.
6. Show the experimental growth plot. Give each student a chance to observe the root and plant growth. Compare the grass growth to plant/forb growth. Have them imagine that this is a prairie. Can they see how dense the root systems of a prairie would be on an actual prairie and how deep the roots may grow? The students should be able to explain the importance of roots in native grasses and plants.
7. Provide students the opportunity to experience a prairie (a field trip to Homestead).

**An Exploring Experience:** Have students split into groups. Have each group draw a picture of the prairie ecosystem (plants, grasses, forbs) including the roots.

## Activity 3

### Searching for Prairie

**Theme:**

The prairie has a variety of plants besides grasses. This variety is called biodiversity.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to identify 3 types of prairie grasses and 2 forbs.
2. On-site at Homestead National Monument of America, students will be able to find three different plants and properly identify them.

**Materials Needed:** sheet of paper, pencils, poster paper, tape, markers, Activity Sheet: Prairie Appreciation Fact Sheet, pictures of some plants of the prairie, camera and film (optional).

**Subject:** science, art

**Skills:** identify, observing, drawing, locating

**Methods:** Students will learn about different aspects of prairie vegetation and then have the opportunity to practice their identification skills by locating vegetation at Homestead National Monument of America.

1. Using pictures or herbarium specimens on-site at Homestead National Monument of America, show the students some grasses and forbs of the prairie. Explain the differences between a grass and a forb (wildflower or non-grass plant). Many museums and plant collection agencies preserve specimens for identification purposes. This type of specimen is called a herbarium specimen.

Note: Explain to students that they can not pick or remove any plants from the monument as it is a protected area. Explain that if we let everyone who came to visit the monument pick a grass or a forb, then eventually there would be none left. Ask students if they can think of other reasons why not to pick the plants on the prairie.

2. Divide the students into two groups. Each group will be given one "Fact Sheet." Instruct students that they will be required to locate each of the grasses/plants listed on their sheet on the restored tallgrass prairie. Have one student from each group record the type of plant found, the location, and a brief description.
3. Have students draw one plant that they found on the prairie and label it. Drawing a plant helps students to notice the type of stem, shape and location of leaves, and the seed head/flower of a plant. If you chose to use the camera, have students photograph the plant.
4. When back in the classroom, have students display their drawings. If you took photos, have students label the photos and display them.
5. Ask the recorder of each group to report what their group discovered and discuss where they found the plant they chose to draw or photograph and why they found it growing in that location.

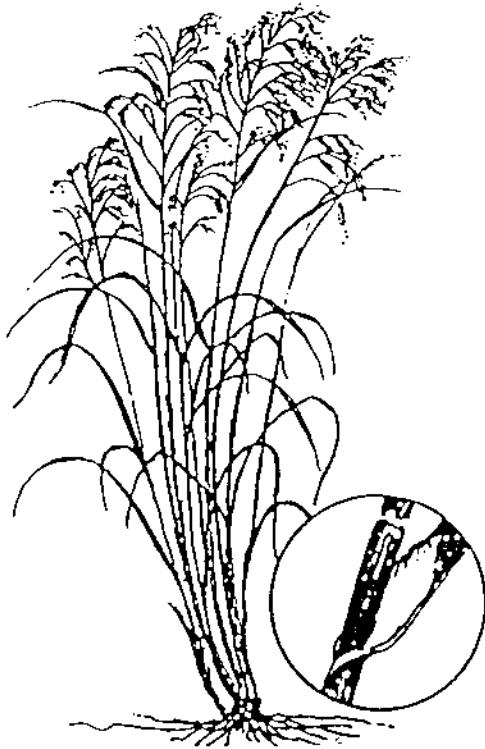
**Adapt to classroom use:** Take several examples of the forbs and grasses either as pictures or sketches, and place them throughout the room for students to locate.

**An Exploring Experience:** Have students create a bulletin board on prairie plants for display for the entire school or at a local library for the community.

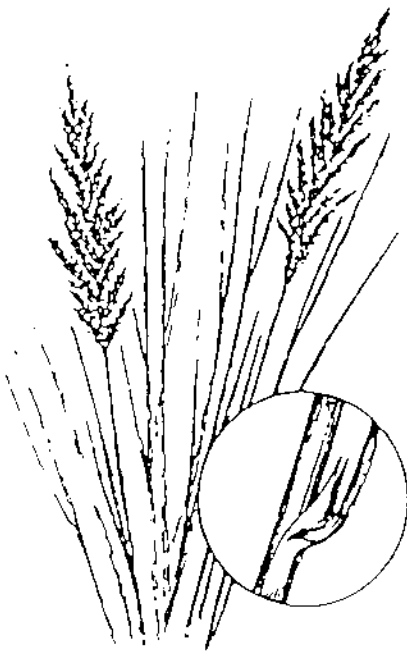
# PRAIRIE APPRECIATION FACT SHEET

## ACTIVITY SHEET

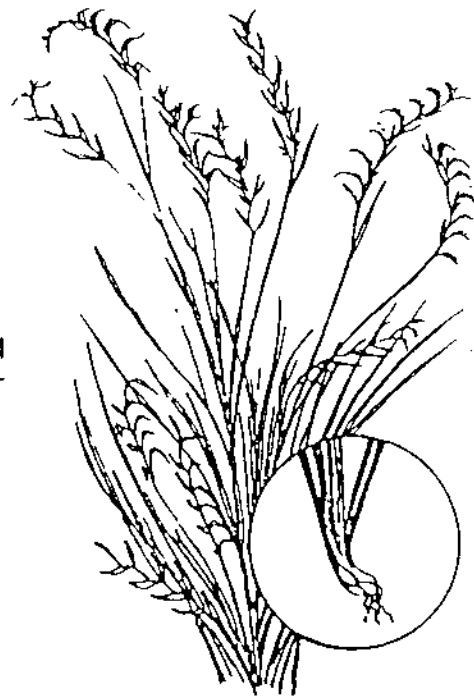
### GRASSES



**Switchgrass:** A common grass in low areas, it has an open seed head and may reach 10 feet in height. It is often cut for hay. Clumps of switchgrass were carefully avoided when American Indians cut up their meat. If the meat was laid on it, sharp glumes from the seeds would stick to it and then get caught in their throats when eaten.



**Indian Grass:** Identified by its golden-brown, plume-like seed masses, it grows up to 6 feet tall in varied soils. It was named for the American Indian. When in bloom, the bright yellow, stamens give it a feathery appearance. It is very nutritious and is excellent hay for winter feeding. It is the state flower of Oklahoma.

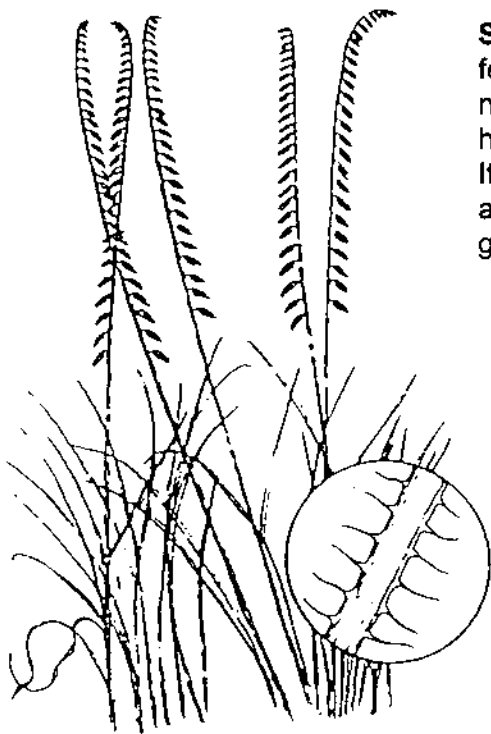


**Little Bluestem:** Smaller than its relative, Big Bluestem, it is also called Bunchgrass and has a striking reddish-tan fall color. It is the state grass of Nebraska.

# PRAIRIE APPRECIATION FACT SHEET

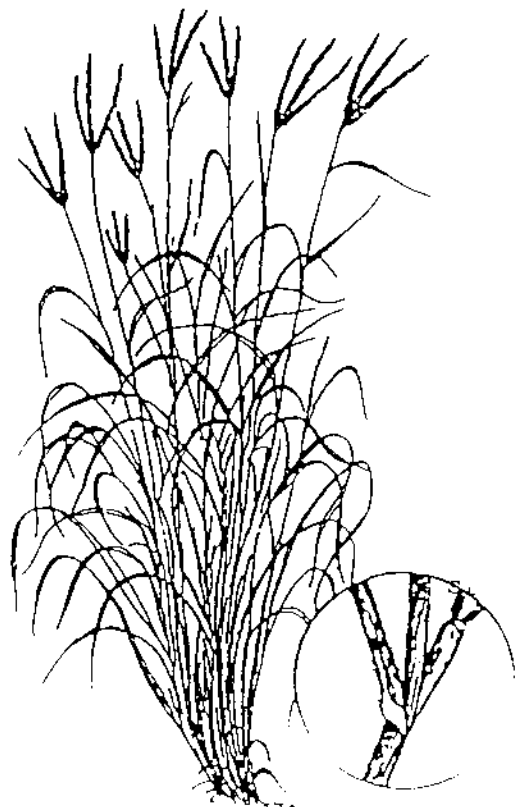
## ACTIVITY SHEET

### GRASSES



**Sideoats Grama:** Growing up to 3 feet high, this grass receives its name from its seeds which tend to hang down on one side of the stem. It turns a beautiful reddish white after the first frost. It is the state grass of Texas.

**Big Bluestem:** (King of the Prairie) The most dominant of the tall grasses, it grows up to 12 feet high; it is also called "turkey foot" because of its three branched seed head. It is often called the "ice cream" of grasses because cattle like it so well. Homesteaders found corn grew best where this grass had grown. The bluish color of its stems give it the name.



# PRAIRIE APPRECIATION FACT SHEET

## ACTIVITY SHEET

### FLOWERING PLANTS

#### Evening Primrose:

This plant is a food staple of Goldfinches. The leaves can be eaten as cooked greens. The boiled roots taste like parsnips. Color: yellow.

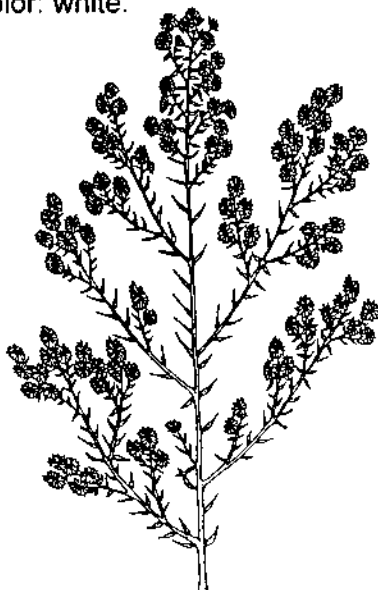


#### Rigid Goldenrod:

Solidago (Goldenrod) species have a rubbery sap from which Thomas Edison had hoped to make a rubber substitute. These plants are incorrectly blamed for causing hay fever and allergies, which are really the reaction to the pollen of Ragweed. Color: Yellow.



**Heath Aster:** The inflorescence (flower head) looks like tiny stars. The word "Aster" is derived from a Greek word meaning star. Color: white.



#### Round Head

**Lespedeza:** This plant is a member of the Legume (bean or pea) family which enriches the soil's nitrogen level. The seed heads are used in dried bouquet arrangements. Color: green/brown.

**Rough Gayfeather:** It grows well in dry, sandy areas. Its corm root system stores water and nutrients. Color: pink.



# PRAIRIE APPRECIATION FACT SHEET

## ACTIVITY SHEET

### FLOWERING PLANTS



**Upright Prairie Coneflower:**

The Oglala Sioux Indians brewed a tea-like beverage from this plant. Its name refers to the cone, or column of tiny flowers in the center of the flower head. Color: Yellow.



**Daisy Fleabane:**

The term "bane" refers to death. This plant's name comes from the belief that if it were dried and stuffed in mattresses, it would kill or repel fleas. Color: White.

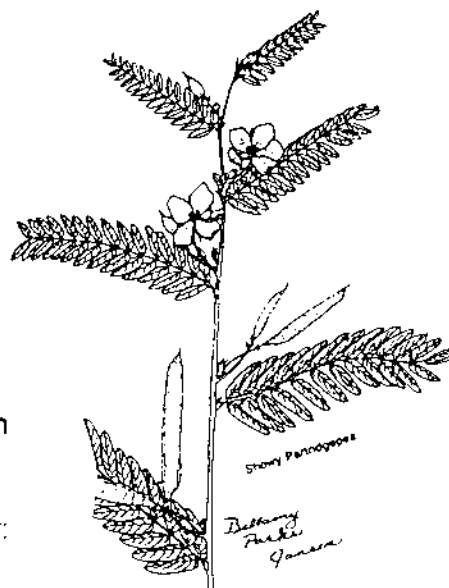


**Late Goldenrod:** The state flower of Nebraska, this member of the Sunflower family has a plume-shaped flower head. Color: Yellow.

**Showy Partridge Pea:** Small bean or pea-like pods of this plant will "explode" or forcibly release their tiny brown seeds when ripe. Color: Yellow.



**Blackeyed Susan:** Its leaves were dried and brewed as a kidney remedy by early Americans. Recent research indicates that it may have antibiotic properties. Color: Yellow.



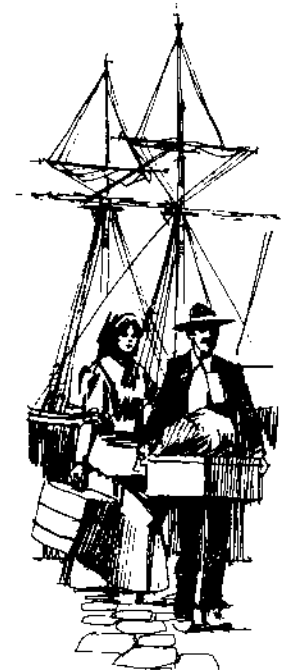
# PEOPLE ON THE PLAINS



Earthen Lodge, Photo Courtesy of Nebraska State Historical Society.



Shores Family Photo by Solomon D. Butcher Photo Courtesy of Nebraska State Historical Society



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## Unit Four

## People on the Plains

### UNIT FOUR

The following is background information for creating lesson plans. Activities start on page 63.

Over hundreds, even thousands of years, many people have called the Great Plains their homeland.

### First Plains People

The first people living on the prairie were the ancestors of the various American Indian Tribes. Through *archeology*, we can surmise that the plains have been inhabited for centuries by groups of people who lived in semi-permanent villages and depended on planting crops. Their culture was based mainly on an even balance between raising crops of corn, squash, and beans, and hunting animals. Many of the ideas we associate with American Indians such as the *travois*, various ceremonies, *tipis*, *earth lodges*, and controlled bison hunts come from these first prairie people.

Horses were brought to Mexico by the Spanish in the 1600s. With the migration of the horse from Mexico in the 1700s, the culture of the plains changed from a permanent lifestyle to one that was more mobile. Before the horse, the cultures hunted and traveled in relatively small restricted areas. With the introduction of the horse in American Indian society, greater distances could be covered. The horse became a status symbol to the American Indian. Because of the importance of owning horses, individuals amassed vast herds of these animals.

The first known historic tribe in the plains area was the Pawnee who lived in earth lodges part of the year and traveled in tipis during the hunts in the summer and fall. The earth lodge



tribes such as the Arikara, Hidatsa, Mandan, Omaha, Oto, Ponca, Pawnee, Wichita, Winnebago, among others, planted crops such as corn, squash, and beans and stored their food in underground storage caches. Their semisubterranean lodges held from 10 to 40 people. Several lodges were grouped together to form fortified villages. Smaller groups ventured out with tipis for the bison hunts, returning to the earth lodge for winter.

#### GLOSSARY

*Abolitionist* - a person who believed slavery should be illegal

*Archeology* - the scientific study of the material remains of people, customs, and life of the past

*Clan* - a group of people united by common interest and characteristics

*Earth Lodge* - a large circular house that had dirt walls and a roof held up by trunks of trees and then covered with dirt or sod; was lived in by some American Indians on the plains

*Exoduster* - an African-American who was an ex-slave who moved west to homestead and own land

*Immigrant* - a person who comes from another country to take up permanent residence in a new country

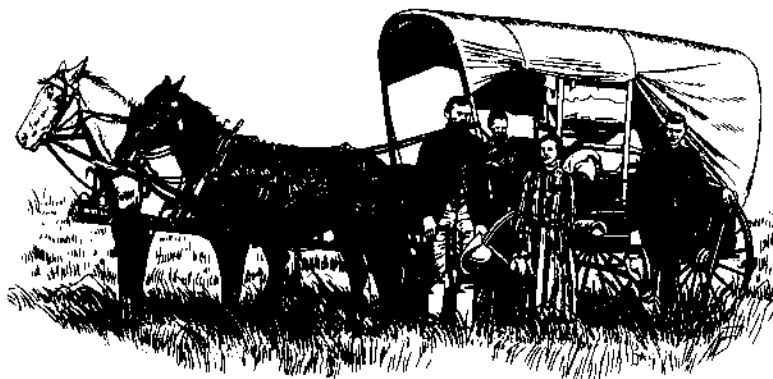
*Propaganda* - exaggerated idea, facts, or examples used to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause

*Tipi* - a circular house made of tree poles and animal skins that some American Indians on the plains lived in; Sioux word meaning "home"

*Travois* - a vehicle used by American Indians that has two poles tied together at one end, and a net or cloth at the other end to carry items; pulled by an animal or person.

Other tribes on the prairie were the warriors' societies that are typically associated with the Great Plains. These groups, such as the Lakota-Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapahos, Comanche, Kiowa, Crow, among others, lived mainly in tipis, traveling through the plains region. These groups were the great hunters of the plains, following the bison or "buffalo" and foraging for berries, roots, and other plants. They lived in *clans*, traveling to familiar places and encampments. Often they traded and warred with the earth lodge dwellers.

Many tribes or nations, had similar ideas and beliefs. They believed in the circle of life, and the belief that everything is connected. You were born, you grew, you lived, you died and you returned to Mother Earth to allow others to be born, creating a circle that never ends. They believed everything in life is dependent on everything else. They also believed that every rock, grass, plant, animal, and man had a spirit. Their beliefs and religion were part of their everyday life. The land was the mother of all things, and had to be treated with great care and respect. They lived close to the land for centuries and understood the "ways of Mother Earth." They believed that Mother Earth provided for them, the animals and the plants as long as they did not abuse or take more than they needed to survive.



Storytelling was a very important aspect of Plains Tribal life. The stories explained the ways and beliefs of their people to children. This is how children learned of their history, their world, and their traditions. Many of these stories or legends are still used today for the same reasons.

When the prairie was changed by the coming of the homesteaders, the culture of the prairie tribes was dramatically effected. The prairie tribes were moved off their traditional homelands onto reservations by the United States government to make way for the ever increasing settlement. They were forced into a foreign lifestyle that was in opposition to their own.

## Many Faces of the Homesteaders

Many people traveled from east of the Mississippi River in the United States and from Europe to homestead in the Great Plains area. They came for different reasons. The one thing all the homesteaders had in common was the desire for better lives for themselves and their children. Many believed the way to accomplish this was through owning land.

When people heard there was free land

Percentages of Total Population, United States, 1870-1930

PLACE OF BIRTH	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930
England, Scotland, & Wales	13.6	13.7	13.5	11.3	9.1	8.2	8.6
Ireland	32.7	27.8	20.2	15.6	10.0	7.5	6.5
Other Northern Europe	8.8	10.8	13.6	13.7	12.3	11.9	11.1
Germany	29.8	29.4	30.1	25.8	17.1	12.1	11.3
Eastern Europe	1.7	3.3	6.9	14.2	27.4	32.0	30.2
Southern Europe	0.5	0.9	2.2	5.1	11.3	13.7	14.8
Canada	8.7	10.7	10.6	11.4	8.9	8.1	9.1
Other American	1.0	1.3	1.2	1.3	2.1	4.3	5.7

Information taken from: *A People and A Nation: A History of the United States, Volume II. Since 1865, page 501.*

west of the Mississippi River open to farming, they came in increasing numbers to stake their claims. They came to better themselves and to establish farms to pass on to their children. City dwellers dreamed of farming and owning land as there was little land left in the eastern United States that was not owned. Eastern farmers came west to start over as they were dissatisfied with the land in the east. After the Civil War, many Union soldiers moved west to homestead partially for new opportunities and partially because of the new laws allowing veterans to use their service time toward the requirement time on their homestead claim.

## All Colored People THAT WANT TO GO TO KANSAS.

On September 8th, 1877,

Can do so for \$5.00

### IMMIGRATION.

Whereas, We, the colored people of Lexington, Ky., knowing that there is a abundance of choice lands now belonging to the Government, have assembled ourselves together for the purpose of locating on said lands. Therefore,

Be it Resolved, That we do now organize ourselves into a Colony, as follows:— Any person wishing to become a member of this Colony can do so by paying the sum of one dollar (\$1.00), and this money is to be paid by the first of September, 1877, in instalments of twenty-five cents at a time, or otherwise, as may be desired.

Resolved, That this Colony, has agreed to consolidate itself with the Freedmen's Town, Bolivar Valley, Graham County, Kansas, and can only do so by entering the vacant lands now in their midst, which cost \$5.00.

Resolved, That this Colony shall consist of seven officers—President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and three Trustees. President—M. M. Bell; Vice-President—James Talbot; Secretary—W. J. Niles; Treasurer—Daniel Clarke; Trustees—Jerry Lee, William Jones, and Abner Webster.

Resolved, That this Colony shall have from one to two hundred militia, more or less, who may require, to keep peace and order, and any member failing to pay is liable to be expelled, or failing to comply with the above rules in any particular, will not be considered as protected by the Colony.

Sign courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society

these freedmen did not find the freedom they had hoped to gain. In retaliation for the loss of a free labor source and changes in the southern lifestyle, many African Americans were robbed of property, beaten, refused rights, and at times lynched by separatist groups like the Ku Klux Klan which was formed after the Civil War. Many of the Black Americans looked for freedom on the western frontier. These ex-slaves were inspired by the exodus from slavery in the Bible and often compared their movement to the west with that story. They were called "Exodusters." In 1879, between 20,000 and 40,000 Exodusters headed west to homestead. Many traveled in family and community groups, starting towns and communities for African Americans in the

west. Many Southerners tried to stop the Exodusters from leaving for fear of losing their labor force. Many Exodusters headed for the Kansas territory where John Brown, a famous abolitionist, fought to keep Kansas a free state for all people. At first they were welcome in the Great Plains, but eventually, people started to force the exoduster to move because of racism. Still, more freedmen came west to homestead.

The railroads and pioneer communities, sent representatives to Europe to get people to homestead in the Great Plains. In pamphlets, railroad agents showed pictures of tree-lined streets, flowing streams, and rich farm lands in order to encourage Europeans to immigrate to the U.S. Some Europeans, called *immigrants*, believed the stories. Food shortages, land scarcity, social and religious oppression in some parts of Europe, led many to come to the U.S. to homestead. Some formed groups to travel together, setting up communities. Thousands left Europe bound for the "land of milk and honey" only to find that the stories they heard held little truth.

Many single people, both men and women, came west to homestead. Single men came west and often looked for wives to help them homestead. Single women came to start a new life and own land. In the eastern states, women were not usually allowed to own property.

## Travel to the Great Plains


There were many ways to travel to the Great Plains during the homesteading era. The early homesteaders traveled by river boats along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers to places like Omaha and then they traveled by wagons to their homestead. These routes were set up by explorers and early pioneers who traveled to the west coast. In 1869, the transcontinental railroad was completed, decreasing the time to travel west. Often, homesteaders headed west via trains and then used wagons for the shorter distance to their claims. The immigrants from Europe traveled several months by steamship to the U.S.

# Railroad Advertisement

**PRODUCTS will PAY for LAND and IMPROVEMENTS.**

**LARGE DISCOUNTS FOR CASH.**

**BETTER TERMS THAN EVER!**



VALLEY OF THE BIG BLUE, SOUTH OF BEWARD, NEB.

**THE BEST**

**PRAIRIE LANDS**

**IOWA AND NEBRASKA**

ARE FOR SALE BY THE

**Burlington & Missouri River Railroad Co.**

**10 Years' Credit. LOW PRICES 6 Per Cent. Interest.**

**ONLY THE INTEREST PAYMENT DOWN.**

**PAYMENTS ON PRINCIPAL BEGIN THE FOURTH YEAR.**

**BUY LAND EXPLORING TICKETS.**

And the Cost of Same will be Allowed on First Payment made on Land bought within 90 Days from Date of Ticket. HALF FARE to Families of Purchasers. LOW FREIGHTS on Household Goods and Farm Stock.

For Circulars with full information on every question, will be sent FREE to every applicant.

ADDRESSES:

Large Sectional Map of Iowa, 50 cents.  
Nebraska, 30 cents.

**LAND COMMISSIONER B. & M. R. R.,**

LINCOLN, NEB., for Nebraska Lands.  
BURLINGTON, IOWA, for Iowa Lands.

**BUY BEFORE JULY 1st, 1875, and Secure these Terms.**

**PRODUCTS will PAY for LAND and IMPROVEMENTS.**

**PREMIUMS FOR IMPROVEMENTS.**

**PRODUCTS will PAY for LAND and IMPROVEMENTS.**

Railroad sign courtesy of Nebraska State Historical Society

# Farmers Without Land

SHOULD TAKE THE

# CENTRAL BRANCH

## MO. PACIFIC R. R.

For the Great Homestead Area of North-western Kansas, where

### Five Million Acres

 Of Lands without Farmers await them.

These Lands are subject to Entry under the Pre-emption, Homestead and Timber Acts, and now is the time for those who desire to make homes for themselves and their children to secure them.

The rapid extension of the CENTRAL BRANCH places lands within easy reach of all, and during the present year there will be such a rush to this region that those who wish to obtain desirable Lands FREE, should go at once and secure them. In order that all may be informed of the requirements of the laws governing the securing of Government Land, we have prepared and published in this sheet the COMPLETE text of each of the Acts under which they are to be acquired, in convenient form for reference.

The advantages gained by seeking homes on and beyond the line of the CENTRAL BRANCH are many, and we enumerate a few of them.

**1ST**—No Land Grant Railroad runs into this section, hence, Pre-emptors and Homesteaders are entitled to acquire full quarter sections instead of eighty acre tracts.

**2ND**—The Central Branch is rapidly extending its road through the country comprised of these Lands, and settlers will have the advantage of being near to markets, schools, churches and all other necessities of civilized people, long before they have acquired the title to their Land, and before it is taxable. No taxes until title is complete.

**3RD**—The country is noted for healthfulness, being composed of beautiful rolling prairies and fertile valleys, FREE from swamps and malaria, and well watered by numerous running streams, the banks of which are covered with GOOD TIMBER.

**4TH**—These lands are FIRST-CLASS AGRICULTURAL LANDS, adapted to raising Corn, Winter Wheat, Spring Wheat and all other small grains, as well as Broom Corn and Vegetables, thus admitting a rotation of Crops. They are well watered, making excellent range for stock.

First page of railroad pamphlet courtesy of Kansas State Historical Society

## Activity 1

### Following the Buffalo

**Theme:**

American Indians lived off the land for generations, using what the land provided and adapting to a lifestyle based on survival.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to name one type of house that American Indians lived in.
2. Students will be able to name two ways the American Indian utilized the land to survive.

**Materials Needed:** Pictures of the types of homes the American Indians lived in, parts of a bison

**Subject:** social studies, science

**Skills:** understanding, analyzation

**Methods:** On-site at Homestead National Monument of America, students will explore the world of American Indians through discovering how they used the bison, prairie, and crops. This activity is conducted at the Visitor Center at Homestead National Monument of America.

A member of the monument staff will be conducting the following program:

1. Ask students what types of houses the American Indians lived in on the plains? (This is to find out the knowledge base of the students) Explain to students that there were two cultures of American Indians on the Plains - Earth Lodgers and Tipi Dwellers. Explain how the two lived.
2. First - The Bison Grocery Store. The instructor will show the parts of the bison, explaining the different uses by American Indians and the concept that all parts were utilized.
3. Second - The Crops of the Earth Lodgers. The instructor will explain that American Indians also grew plants like corn, squash, and beans, and preserved them in storage caches.
4. Third - Plants of the Prairie. The instructor will lead the group on a walk through the prairie. Students will get to touch, feel and examine several different plants (i.e., yarrow, indigo, sunflowers, grasses) that were used by American Indians.

**Adapt to Classroom use:** Set up centers similar to the above three steps in the classroom for students to discover the uses of the bison, planting crops, and plants of the prairie.

**An Exploring Experience:** Have students write a story choosing an American Indian Tribe and describing a day in the life of one person in that tribe.

## Activity 2

### The People who Came West

**Theme:**

Many different types of people came to the Great Plains to make a better life for themselves and their families. The railroads and homestead communities advertised in Europe "free land" in America. Many people came to the U.S. to stake a claim.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to state one reason that people from the east came west.
2. Students will be able to state why African Americans came west.
3. Students will be able to state why European immigrants came to the U.S. and what they hoped would happen in this new land.

**Materials Needed:** Material Sheet: People Who Came West Cards, world map, board game

**Subject:** social studies

**Skills:** analyzing, moving objects

**Methods:** Students will learn about the different groups of people that came west to homestead through an activity that assigns each student a person to role play.

1. Explain to students that many different people came west to homestead bringing with them their own hopes, dreams, and cultural backgrounds.
2. Read Claimsey's statement to students.

**Claimsey:**

Out here in the west when I first came out to claim land, there were very few white men and even fewer white women. Many Indian tribes once inhabited the plains. The government moved them to reservations to make room for the new settlers. At first I was very leery about meeting or seeing Indians as I had heard stories about them thieving and killing. Can't say I found much truth in the stories. Sometimes a few braves would walk right into your home and want food, but I don't think they meant much harm. They'd give my wife a scare, eat a bit of our food, and leave. They live very differently from the way I live, but after learning about their ways, it seems to me to make some sense. The Omaha, Ponca, Pawnee, Ojibwa, and the Sioux once lived on this land. Some still pass by now and then on horseback to and from the reservations. They tell me their people have been here a long time, many generations, and they worked out the best ways to live with the prairie. At least it's the best way for them.

In the years following the "War Between the States," many ex-slaves or freedmen came west to make a better life for themselves. They were called "Exodusters" and many of them settled in Kansas and Nebraska in communities like Nicodemus, Kansas, Omaha, Nebraska, and Brownlee, Nebraska in Cherry County. Some settled even further west in several other territories. The Shore family lived about six miles away from me and came from South Carolina and Canada. They considered homesteading a new opportunity, where they could have something they never had before - their own land. My other neighbors, the Clanceys, came from Ireland during the second potato famine fleeing from religious strife and hunger. Several of my neighbors were from other places in Europe like Czechoslovakia, Sweden, and Germany. They all left their homelands to come to the land of "milk and honey." In many ways, my neighbors were like me, searching for something better. True, they had different ways, spoke different languages, but they were good people. They formed the helpful community we belonged to.

3. Ask students where Claimsey's neighbors are from. Show students the world map. Ask where they think people moved

from when they came west. Explain to students that people came from east of the Mississippi River in the U.S. and from Europe for many different reasons.

4. Explain to students that they will learn about some of the people who moved west and some of the reasons why they moved.
5. Divide students into groups of 6 and give each group a copy of the paper game board. Hand out People Who Moved West cards, one to each student. The cards come in packets of six. Be sure each group gets six groups of cards. Card groups are as follows: 1) an elderly woman from Pennsylvania, 2) an African-American family from South Carolina, 3) a family from Germany, 4) a single female from Virginia, 5) a man from Czechoslovakia, 6) a Civil War Veteran and his family from Ohio.
6. The idea of the game is for students to gather information about their person and share this information with the rest of the students in their group. Students need to gather all 5 cards related to their individual by moving across the game board. Students will have to roll the dice to move to a different square and do what that square tells them to do. To start, roll the dice. The person with the lowest number goes first. Continue in a clockwise order. As each student starts, they must read their card to the group. There are 6 piles of cards next to the board for the different information on the people. The piles are: 1) Person Card tells who they are, 2) Family Card tells if they have a family or not, 3) Travel Card tells how they traveled west, 4) Reason Card tells why they came west, 5) Possessions Card tells what they brought with them, and 6) Living Card tells what the people did before they left their homeland. When students land on or **pass over a game board square that tells them to pick up an information card**, they need to pick up the one that matches the number on their Person cards. They must read that information to the group. Then it becomes the next person's turn. The game continues until each player finishes and collects all 6 information cards for his/her person. They do not need to roll the exact number to finish.
7. Gather students back together. Ask what they learned about the people who came west to homestead. Where were they from? Why did they come west to homestead? What do they think happened to them on their claims?

**An Exploring Experience:** Have students collect information on where their ancestors came from and ask if anyone knows why they moved. Either have students do a collage of the countries their ancestors came from or have students choose one country. Have students include pictures of items that come from that country.

# People Who

START HERE

Pick-up a People Card	Roll Again!	You're on the move!	Where are you from?	Skip a one!
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Stake a Claim!	Roll again!	Lost a step in your travel plans. Go back 3!	Go back 4! You forgot a family member!	Going
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Why are you going west? Pick-up a Reason Card.				
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You're on the move!	Life seems Good!	Are you going to stake a claim? Go back 4.	You're moving right along. Pick-up a card of choice	Build
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DO YOU KNOW WHO YOUR PERSON IS??	Can you make it? Go back 1!	What did you do? Pick-up a Living Card!	Skip ahead one!	You f bag! and g
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FINISHED!!!!

# o Came West

head	Who is Your Family? Pick-up A Family Card.	Go back three!	You got a slow start, go back 2 and get your family	Who are you!
				How are you doing?
West!	How are you traveling West! Pick-up your travel card.	Roll again!	Skip a turn!	Going West for Free Land!
a house!	Go Back 2!	You are going West!	Skip ahead 3!	Your house fell down! Go back 4 and build again!
				How are you doing?
orgot a Go back 3 et it!	Roll again!	Didn't plow deep enough! Go back 2 and plow again!	What did you bring with you? Pick-up a Possession Card.	Plow some land!

**People Card #1  
Person #1**

**People Card #1  
Person #2**

**People Card #1  
Person #3**

**People Card #1  
Person #4**

**People Card #1  
Person #5**

**People Card #1  
Person #6**

**Family Card  
Person #1**

**Family Card  
Person #2**

**Family Card  
Person #3**

**Family Card  
Person #4**

**Family Card  
Person #5**

**Family Card  
Person #6**

<b>Person #2</b> <b>An African American</b> <b>from South Carolina</b>	<b>Person #1</b> <b>Elderly person from</b> <b>Pennsylvania</b>
<b>Person #4</b> <b>22 year old from</b> <b>Virginia</b>	<b>Person #3</b> <b>25 year old from</b> <b>Germany</b>
<b>Person #6</b> <b>Civil War Veteran in</b> <b>late 20's from the Ohio</b> <b>Valley</b>	<b>Person #5</b> <b>30 year old from</b> <b>Czechoslovakia</b>
<b>Person #2</b> <b>You have a spouse and</b> <b>3 children</b>	<b>Person #1</b> <b>You have 3 adult</b> <b>children and 2</b> <b>grandchildren</b>
<b>Person #4</b> <b>You are single</b>	<b>Person #3</b> <b>You have a spouse and</b> <b>4 children</b>
<b>Person #6</b> <b>You have a spouse and</b> <b>2 children</b>	<b>Person #5</b> <b>You are single</b>

**Travel Card  
Person #1**

**Travel Card  
Person #2**

**Travel Card  
Person #3**

**Travel Card  
Person #4**

**Travel Card  
Person #5**

**Travel Card  
Person #6**

**Reason Card  
Person #1**

**Reason Card  
Person #2**

**Reason Card  
Person #3**

**Reason Card  
Person #4**

**Reason Card  
Person #5**

**Reason Card  
Person #6**

<b>Person #2</b> <b>Traveled by train and then horseback</b>	<b>Person #1</b> <b>Traveled by wagon</b>
<b>Person #4</b> <b>Took the train to Omaha and then bought a buckboard</b>	<b>Person #3</b> <b>Traveled by boat to the U.S. and then by train</b>
<b>Person #6</b> <b>Traveled by train and then bought a wagon</b>	<b>Person #5</b> <b>Traveled by boat to the U.S. and then by train</b>
<b>Person #2</b> <b>You wanted to own land and work for self</b>	<b>Person #1</b> <b>You wanted land for your children</b>
<b>Person #4</b> <b>You could own land something you could not do in Virginia</b>	<b>Person #3</b> <b>You came to the U.S. for free land, something not heard of in Europe</b>
<b>Person #6</b> <b>The government offered land to veterans who fought in the Civil War</b>	<b>Person #5</b> <b>You could own land and be free</b>

**Possessions Card  
Person #1**

**Possessions Card  
Person #2**

**Possessions Card  
Person #3**

**Possessions Card  
Person #4**

**Possessions Card  
Person #5**

**Possessions Card  
Person #6**

**Living Card  
Person #1**

**Living Card  
Person #2**

**Living Card  
Person #3**

**Living Card  
Person #4**

**Living Card  
Person #5**

**Living Card  
Person #6**

<b>Person #2</b> <b>3 carpetbags filled with clothes</b>	<b>Person #1</b> <b>1 trunk and bag filled with clothes and mementoes</b>
<b>Person #4</b> <b>1 trunk filled with clothes and household things</b>	<b>Person #3</b> <b>2 bags filled with clothes and 1 box of tools</b>
<b>Person #6</b> <b>1 trunk filled with good clothes and household things</b>	<b>Person #5</b> <b>Brought carpentry tools and clothes</b>
<b>Person #2</b> <b>He was a slave on a plantation and was freed after the Civil War.</b>	<b>Person #1</b> <b>She is a widow and worked with her husband on their farm.</b>
<b>Person #4</b> <b>She was a school teacher.</b>	<b>Person #3</b> <b>He worked as a blacksmith.</b>
<b>Person #6</b> <b>He was a farmer and then a soldier in the Civil War.</b>	<b>Person #5</b> <b>He was a carpenter.</b>

## Activity 3

### Bringing It Along

**Theme:**

Representatives of western towns and railroads handed out propaganda to people to entice them to move west.

Misled by these advertisements, many homesteaders came west unprepared for life on the Great Plains.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to state how homesteaders came west.
2. Students will be able to state what people thought the west looked like and how they arrived at that idea.

**Materials Needed:** Map of the U.S. in 1860, People Who Came West Cards from Activity 2, examples of the railroad poster and ads

**Subject:** social studies

**Skills:** thinking, applying, analyzing, organizing

**Methods:** Students will learn the way many people traveled west to stake a claim. They will also learn about the *propaganda* the town and railroad representatives used to entice people to homestead.

1. Display a map of the U.S. in 1860 - 1930 that includes transportation trails and railroad lines. Ask students for modes of travel? Ask students how they think homesteaders traveled west to stake a claim?

2. Read Claimsey's statement

Claimsey:

I made a fair living back east, but I didn't own my own place. Blacksmithing was honest hard work, but I wanted something more, a place to call my own, to build and pass on to my children. I wasn't quite sure where that would be until I heard about the land the government and the railroads were offering out west. The railroads advertised all over, with pictures of established towns and rich soil for planting crops. All one had to do was go west and stake a claim on free land. They said if you planted crops they would grow right before your very eyes. The soil out west was just waiting to be worked and used. At least that's what the advertisements said. I headed West by train to Omaha in the Nebraska Territory. Then I bought a buckboard and a team and rode west to find a claim.

3. Give students the following information:
  1. The trans-continental railroad was completed in 1869.
  2. The stagecoach was in heavy use where trains were not available.
  3. Wagons, buggies & buckboards were still in use by individual families to get around.
  4. River boats could be used on the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers; many other rivers out west were too shallow or rocky for river boats
  5. The automobile was in use in 1909, but most people could not afford one. It was not generally used until the 1920's and 1930's.
4. Have students pull out their "People Who Came West" cards from Activity 2. Have students return to their original groups. The students need to ask the following questions of each other in regard to their people cards: 1) Where did that person come from? 2) How did that individual get from his/her place of origin to the west? 3) Did they change modes of travel? 4) How many different modes?

5. Explain to students that just as Claimsey said, people coming west were led to believe that there were established towns, fertile soil and plenty of rainfall (to dispute the "desert" idea) out west. So, many of the homesteaders brought very little with them and were unprepared.
6. Tell students that the railroads and towns out west sent representatives to the eastern United States and Europe to get people to move to the Great Plains. Often the representatives used propaganda to make the area seem better than it really was. Show some of the signs that the railroad used. Ask students what they see in the signs.
7. Ask students to imagine that they are town leaders in a small town out west and there are very few people living nearby. The people around the town have come to them and asked them to go east and get some people to move to their community. What would they say to get people to move? Have students design their own propaganda sign.

**An Exploring Experience:** Have students draw and map their journey to their homestead claim. Have students create a propaganda pamphlet for the communities they live in now to entice people to move there. What would they show and write in their pamphlet? Have students contact their local Chamber of Commerce and ask for the information they send to people thinking about moving to their town. Have students bring in examples of modern day propaganda, with promises or exaggerations.

# PRAIRIE LIFE



Fighting the Fire by Frenzeny and Tavernier. Courtesy of Nebraska State Historical Society

## Unit Five

## Prairie Life

### UNIT FIVE

The following is background information for creating lesson plans. Activities start on page 81.

### Homes on the Prairie

One of the requirements under the Homestead Act of 1862, was that a homesteader had to build a house and live in that building for five years. In some areas, building traditional types of houses was difficult to accomplish. Creative alternatives were needed.

In the eastern U.S., early settlers relied upon the forests to provide wood to build *log houses*.

When early homesteaders moved west, they too relied upon the forest and tree-covered areas for wood to build houses. Often homesteaders would search for land located near streams and trees so they would not have to haul wood from far away. The early log cabins were constructed by building a base and floor out of wooden planks or clay. Logs were squared on the top and bottom, and laid horizontally on top of each other to build the walls of the cabin. The logs were fitted together so the wind and rain could not come through the cracks. A mixture of clay and grass which was placed between the logs, created plaster. This process was called "chinking." The roof of a cabin was made of shingles or sod.

When people began moving out to areas with fewer trees, homesteaders had to develop another type of home that required little or no wood. Two types of houses were developed: the dugout and the sod house. The *dugout*, a cave like structure, was dug into a hill side. Three to four sides were built into the hill. Sometimes a blanket covering the front of the dugout was used instead of a door. This was

the quickest way to construct a home on the prairie.

The *sod house* took time. This type of house used the compact dirt and prairie root system for building bricks. The prairie grass grew very thick, creating a strong, interconnected, and tightly compacted root system.

Homesteaders would cut the sod into usable bricks about 1 ½ - 2 feet in length, 1 foot in width, and several inches deep. The thicker or deeper the sod bricks were, the less one had to use. The brick would then be laid out into the oblong shape of a house 16 by 20 feet. The walls were 2 rows of sod wide. The sod bricks would be layered 4 rows up. They would then cross brace another 4 layers of sod brick on the previously laid 2 rows. This type of alternate cross bracing created a very sturdy and durable structure. The roof of the house was covered with sod or dirt.

Sometimes a homesteader would dig partially into a hillside and then use sod bricks for the front of the house.

Things like doors and windows were very expensive items to the homesteaders. Often the doorways were covered by a blanket until wood could be located or bought to build a door. The windows were framed with wood. Actual glass was rare as it had to be shipped from the eastern cities. People either covered their windows with blankets or used greased oiled paper for the coverings. Homesteaders



sometimes used newspapers as wallpaper or made a plaster out of clay and grasses for the walls. White wash was sometimes applied to give a cleaner appearance to these walls.

## Tools of the Homesteader

Homesteaders found that many of the tools they had used in their homelands were not practical on the prairie. Homesteaders still used the *adz* to square logs for a cabin. Because of the lack of trees, adzes and axes were rarely used to build other types of houses as these tools were used mainly for shaping wood. The *sickle* and the *scythe* were used for cutting grasses. Neither hand tools were very economical for the huge expanses of grasslands on the prairie. In the eastern U.S., a scythe could easily be used to cut the few acres of crops one had planted. In the west, the few acres cut in a day, barely scraped the surface of what was planted. Homesteaders created and improved upon ways to accomplish the tasks faster and better. Improved tools, like the *grain cradle* and the *reaper* could cut several acres a day, making it easier to work large tracts of land. Other tools like the *steel plow* and *sod cutter* assisted the homesteader in cutting through the tough, interconnected root system of the prairie grasses. Other plows and cutting tools would bend and break under the strain of cutting through the sod.

Another tool that was very important to homesteaders was the windmill. Since water were scarce, wells were dug to supply homesteads with water. Some homesteaders harnessed the wind, which blew nearly all the time, and used it to pump up water from an underground well.

## Daily Life

For the homesteaders, life on the plains was rough and hard. Everyone had to pitch in to help the family survive. The men plowed, planted, and harvested the crops. They took the grain to the nearest *mill* which could take several days of traveling. The women took

## GLOSSARY

*Adz* - an axe like tool with a curved blade, used to shape logs for log cabins

*Bee* - a gathering of people for a special purpose; sewing bee or husking bee

*Buffalo or cow chips* - a piece of dry dung used for fueling a fire

*Cats* - twisted or braided grass used for fueling a fire

*Dugout* - a rough shelter dug into the side of a hill

*Grain Cradle* - a tool that has a long handle with a thin blade and a cradle behind the blade to catch the grass or grain being cut

*Log House/Cabin* - a shelter formed by squaring logs and placing them on top of each other

*Mill* - a machine for grinding grain into flour or meal

*Reaper* - a machine used to cut grass or grain

*Scythe* - a long, thin slightly curved blade on a long handle for cutting grass and grain

*Sickle* - a tool used for cutting grass or grain

*Sod cutter* - a tool used to cut the thick root cover of the prairie sod into bricks or square chunks

*Sod house/soddie* - a house formed by cutting sod into strips and layering pieces on top one another, similar to laying bricks

*Steel plow* - a large, heavy piece of farm equipment used for cutting and turning over the soil

care of the house and the garden. They often sold butter and eggs to supplement the family income. This money paid for the extras the family could not otherwise afford. Children helped out wherever they were needed. They might gather *buffalo or cow chips* or make "cats" for fuel, herd the animals, help in the

fields, or any other tasks that needed to be done.

Helping out one's neighbors was common place on the plains. Settlers held gatherings or bees. Neighbors might help plow a field, build a barn or house, or husk the corn. These bees were opportunities for the homesteaders to help each other out and socialize at the same time.

Corn was an important crop for many homesteaders. The corn formed the staple of their diets with such items as cornmeal, corn soup, corn pancakes, cornmush, hominy, dried, baked, and boiled. Children made toys and dolls out of the cobs and husks. Corn was not only an important food to the homesteaders, but the husk and cobs were also used. The leftovers could be burned for fuel.

## The Faces of Adversity and Disaster

Hardships abounded on the prairie. Homesteaders faced many difficulties while living on the Great Plains. Isolation and loneliness created some of the most difficult moments especially for women who seldom left their homesteads.



The climate of the plains was harsh to the homesteaders. One year, a homesteader might face a drought. The next, a flood might ruin every hope of an abundant crop. In the 1880s, rain was abundant, and crops grew. In 1889 and 1890, hot winds blew across the prairie, withering crops. The drought continued through much of the 1890s. Throughout the 1880s, blizzards swept across the plains burying homes, travelers, and livestock for days, weeks, and sometimes even months. The blizzards would pile drifts of snow as high as 11 feet. These drifts blocked railroads for days or even months. People stepping out of their front door could be lost

and frozen in their yards.

Prairie fires were a constant threat to homesteaders. A fire started by lightning, a campfire or the spark of a gun, could sweep across the plains fanned by the prairie winds. Whole farms, even towns could be devoured by the flames.

Grasshopper invasions were another test of the homesteader's endurance. In 1874, huge swarms arrived in the great plain's region and devoured every plant in their path. Homesteaders spoke of trying to cover their gardens as the hoppers stripped their fields. But the hopper ate through the covers to get to the greens below. Stories were told of hoppers eating the onions from the tops down and the inside out, leaving just the shell. The grasshoppers ate every green thing including stripes on clothes. They even ate the wooden handles of farm tools. The grasshoppers or Rocky Mountain Locust left but not before they laid their eggs in the soil. The invasion happened again the following year with the hatching of the eggs, but it was not as devastating as the year before.

## Heading Back or Staying

Many homesteaders could not handle the overwhelming obstacles in their path. Those who came to homestead with the lure of cheap lands, left, "busted and disgusted" at the hard life on the prairie. In several areas, almost half the homesteaders left. Others stayed to "tough it out." Those who stayed were joined by others from the east. As the stream of people for the "free land" of the west continued, they did not listen to the stories and hardships they were about to face.

At one time or another, many homesteaders had to face making the decision to stay on their homestead or head back east. The decision was based on what they expected to find, what they found and faced, and what they gained or lost. There is no doubt that life was hard. For many, the cost of staying was too high.

## Activity 1

### Building a Home

**Theme:**

Homesteaders were very resourceful and imaginative when creating and building a home on the prairie.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to name 3 types of homes that the homesteaders built.
2. Students will be able to state two conditions that helped a homesteader decide what type of home to build.

**Materials Needed:** strips of paper, popsicle sticks, clay or play dough, Land Claim Card #3, Activity Sheet: Homes on the Prairie

**Subject:** art, social studies

**Skills:** understanding, building, putting things together

**Methods:** Using the information on their land cards, the students will build a model of a home on their claim.

1. Ask students to remember and list the requirements to gain title to their claims. Explain that they are going to learn about the types of homes homesteaders built. Hand out land cards #3 to all students.
2. Show the three types of houses the homesteaders had: log cabin, sod , and dugout. Use the Activity sheet: Homes on the Prairie. Ask students why a homesteader would build a sod house instead of a log cabin. Have them think about this question while you read Claimsey's building experience.

**Claimsey:**

After I had filed my claim at the land office, I knew I was required to build a house on the land. I had left my wife back east until I had built a good home. I was getting very tired of my own cooking . . . my wife's a much better cook! My claim had only two trees and a small creek, nothing with which I could build a cabin. The nearest stand of trees was 30 miles away, too far to haul logs for a cabin. I went over to Rick Thomas' and looked his place over. The Thomases lived in a dugout, a hole dug into the side of a hill. I didn't have a hill high enough to make a dugout, and besides I didn't think my wife would like it very much. Rick Thomas told me about the sod shanties some homesteaders were building. The prairie sod out here is down right thick. If you cut it up into squares, it would make good bricks. The grass roots hold the soil together better than nails! I figured this was the home for my family and me. Rick Thomas said he'd come help me cut the sod bricks and lay it out for a house. He suggested I get Max Clancey and his three boys to help out too. I did just that. It took us a couple of days to cut the prairie sod. Boy, was it tough to cut. The Clanceys brought their sod cutter to help me. They all stayed around to lay the house out. We had a high time, laughing and joking. I sure appreciated everyone's help. I told them to let me know if they needed any help and I would give a hand. I built a sod house that was 16 X 20 foot. My wife, she darn near cried when I brought her out, but she put on a stiff upper lip and was determined to make the soddy our home. Often I'd see her shaking her head and muttering to herself about what possessed me to build a home out of dirt. It was quite a shock from how we lived before in a nice wood-framed home back east.

3. Have students read what kind of house they will have to build on their claim. Some will have a log cabin, some a sod house, and some a dugout. Now they have to build their home. Remember to keep it simple. Homesteaders did not

have a lot of money with which to get fancy. The log cabin people should use popsicle sticks. The sod house people should use either paper bricks or clay bricks. The dugout people should use either a box or clay mound and then make the front of the dugouts out of popsicle sticks or strips of paper.

**An Exploring Experience:** Have students furnish their house through drawings and descriptions.

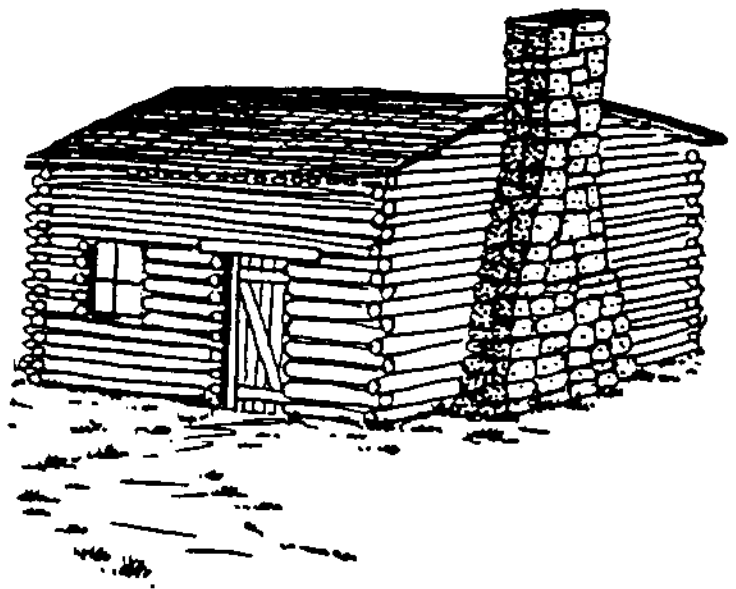
# HOMES ON THE PRAIRIE

## ACTIVITY SHEET

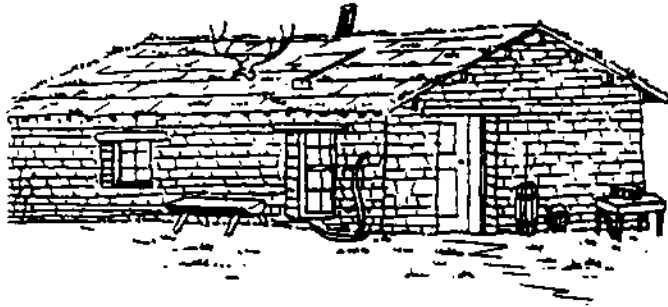
### LOG HOUSES

The earliest homesteaders decided to settle along the streams where they were able to find trees. These trees were important because from them the homesteaders were able to make wooden logs for use in building their homes. There are several steps in building a log house. First, they built a base and then put in a floor made of logs, clay or dirt. The floor was not very smooth when they were initially built, but after being swept and scraped many times they became smoother. The walls of the log house were made by squaring the sides of logs. Then the logs were cut at the corners so they would fit together without any wide cracks between them. When the walls were high enough, the roof was put on. They did this by placing logs across the top.

To stop the rain and snow from coming in, they covered the roof with sod. To keep the wind out, the cracks between the logs in the wall were filled with clay and grass mixed together. This kind of plaster tended to drop off as it dried. This left holes and openings through which the wind whistled through in the winter. Sometimes, log houses had a loft where family members could sleep. The homesteaders left holes in the log walls for windows and a door. There was no glass for homesteaders to use in their windows so they either used paper dipped in fat or else hung a deerskin or buffalo robe at the window openings. The door was made of wood and was attached with leather hinges made from skins. They made a hole in the door and ran a leather string through it which was fastened to the latch on the inside. During the daytime, the string could be pulled to lift the latch and open the door. At night the family would pull the string inside and then the door could not be opened from the outside. This was called a latchstring.



## SOD HOUSE



As people settled further west, there were not enough trees to build log cabins. The homesteaders had to use other items in their environment to build a house. These homesteaders chose to build their houses out of the prairie sod. Before the homesteaders arrived, the prairies had never been plowed; so the grass grew very thick. The roots held the soil together very tightly and could be used to make sod "bricks." Using a plow or sod cutter, the homesteaders would cut the sod into large pieces twelve to eighteen inches wide, two to three feet long, and four inches thick. These

pieces were placed on top of one another just as bricks are laid for a house today. The roof was built by running a long pole across the center of the house. From this, poles or boards were laid to the side walls. On top of these more sod was placed to keep out the rain and snow. The roof of a sod house was built to slant very sharply so the rain would run off quickly. The walls on the inside of a sod house were covered with a kind of plaster made from clay soil. The floor was dirt, but in time, with wear, it became very hard and smooth. It could be swept and even mopped if it was done quickly. An added benefit of this type of flooring was that rats and other rodents could not hide under the floor as they did in log houses. The sod homes were very comfortable. They were warm in the winter and cool in the summer. These homes were often called "soddies."

## DUGOUT

Dugout houses were built by digging into a hillside. Homesteaders would dig out a space and then cover the top of the hole with poles, grass, and earth. A space was left at one end which was used for a door. The homesteaders who lived in dugouts usually put the door facing south to protect their home from the north winds. If there was no wood available, a buffalo robe or a blanket might be used to cover the doorway until a wooden door could be built.



**Land Card #3  
Claim #1**

Your land is rolling hills. The creek is 2 miles away, and the nearest trees are 10 miles away. You build a dugout.

**Land Card #3  
Claim #2**

Your land has a creek running through it and 3 trees. The ravine might be perfect for a dugout.

**Land Card #3  
Claim #3**

Your land is flat and is a mile from the nearest creek. Trees are 10 miles away. You build a sod house.

**Land Card #3  
Claim #4**

Your land is mostly flat. There are 2 creeks running through your land. Trees are numerous. You build a log house.

**Land Card #3  
Claim #5**

Your land is very flat and has a creek running through it. The nearest trees are 12 miles away. You build a sod house.

**Land Card #3  
Claim #6**

Your land is mostly flat with a creek. Trees are ½ mile away. You haul logs for a log cabin.

**Land Card #3  
Claim #7**

Your land is hilly and has a creek with a steep bank. There is only 1 tree. You build a dugout.

**Land Card #3  
Claim #8**

Your land has a creek and is partially hilly. There are trees 1 mile away, and you haul timber for a log cabin.

**Land Card #3  
Claim #9**

Your land is half flat and half rolling hills. There is a creek, but no trees. You build a dugout.

**Land Card #3  
Claim #10**

Your land is rolling hills. There is a creek on the claim and a few trees. The nearest trees for building are 6 miles away. You build a dugout.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #11**

Your land is flat. The nearest creek is 1 mile away. Trees are 5 miles away. You build a sod house.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #12**

Your land is partially flat with lots of trees. You are a  $\frac{1}{2}$  miles from a creek. You build a log cabin.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #13**

Your land is half flat and half hilly. You are 2 miles from a creek and 8 miles from trees. You build a sod house.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #14**

Your land is flat. The creek is a mile away, and trees are 8 miles away. You build a sod house.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #15**

Your land is flat with one hill. You are a mile from the nearest creek and there are no trees. You build a dugout.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #16**

Your land is partially flat with a creek. You are 2 miles from trees. You haul the trees and build a log cabin.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #17**

Your land is half flat and half hilly. There are two creeks running through your land. The nearest trees are 6 miles away. You build a sod house.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #18**

Your land is flat and has a creek. The nearest trees are 1 mile away. You haul the logs to build a log cabin.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #19**

Your land is partially flat with no creeks nearby. There are a few trees and other trees are 2 miles away. You decide to haul the logs for a log cabin.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #20**

Your land is hilly and 2 miles from the nearest creek which has trees. You haul timber for a log cabin.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #21**

Your land is flat with a creek and 3 trees. More trees are 10 miles away. You build a sod house.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #22**

Your land is partially hilly with a creek. The nearest trees are a mile away. You haul the trees to build a log cabin.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #23**

Your land is partially hilly. It is 2 miles to a creek and 15 miles to the nearest trees. You build a dugout.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #24**

Your land is rolling hills with 5 trees. The nearest creek is 1 mile away. You build a dugout.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #25**

Your land is mostly flat with lots of trees and a creek. You build a log cabin.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #26**

Your land is mostly flat and has a creek. You have the only tree for miles. You build a sod house.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #27**

Your land is flat. The nearest creek is a mile away and has a few trees. You build a sod house.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #28**

Your land is rolling hills with a creek. The nearest trees are 10 miles away. You build a dugout.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #29**

Your land is rolling hills with 2 creeks. The nearest trees are 7 miles away. You build a dugout.

**Land Card #3**  
**Claim #30**

Your land is partly hilly and partly flat. There is a creek that has 5 trees. You build a sod house.

## Activity 2

### A Day in the Life of a Homesteader

**Theme:**

Homesteaders had many different types of work they had to complete each day.

**Objective:**

1. Students will be able to name three types of work a homesteader would have to do each day.
2. Students will be able to understand the routine in the daily life of a homesteader.

**Materials:** period clothing, butter churn, wooden eggs, a bowl and spoon, nails and a hammer, a bucket and washboard, a hoe, cow chips or corncobs, a canvas sack and seeds, a basket, a sod cutter, station numbers in two colors (blue and yellow), Material Sheet: Day in the Life of a Homesteader

**Subject:** social studies, physical education

**Skills:** running, coordination, comprehension

**Methods:** At Homestead National Monument of America, students will experience a day in the life of a homesteader through participation in a relay race.

1. Gather students together. Ask what they think a homesteader did each day? Who did these chores? (Teacher note: you will get a variety of chores listed and students will probably state a gender with each one). Explain to students that everyone on the homestead pitched in to do all the chores. Ask if there were circumstances when boys and girls, and men and women did many different kinds of work?
2. Explain to students that they are going to learn about the daily life of homesteaders through a game or relay race.
3. Split students into two teams.
4. Each team starts at different places and follows the color number cards for their team. One team is blue. The other is yellow. Each team will have a deck of numbered cards to pass to each other to assist students in doing the chores in order. Students may assist team mates by coaching, helping with the clothes, counting, etc. Each member of the team must do at least one chore. The team member completing the chore must wear either the apron and bonnet, or the suspenders and felt hat. These items must be passed from one team member to the next.
5. Each chore is numbered on a card in the order the team is to do the chore. The card at the chore also tells students how many times they must do that chore.
6. Start each team at their starting places. Tell them they have to do the following: (see the Material Sheet: Day in the Life of a Homesteader).
7. They are in a race against the other team to get their chores done for the day. If one team is working on a chore and the other is ready for the same chore, the first team there gets to complete that chore. After they are finished, the other team may start. Each person doing the chore must put on the bonnet and apron or the felt hat and suspenders while doing the chore. These clothing items are passed from one team member to the next team member. The clothing items must be placed neatly back in the baskets to complete the race.
8. The first team to complete their chores wins the relay race.

9. Members from opposite teams can assist you in watching the other team in the race. Both teams need to finish the race.
10. Gather the students together. Ask what they learned about the daily life of homesteaders and the work they had to complete? (Teacher note: students should be able to explain what they did and the purpose of each chore)
11. Take students to the Implement Shed room of the park museum. Have students look at the different tools. How were the different tools used by the homesteaders? Then take the students to the tool section in the museum and ask the same question.

**An Exploring Experience:** Have students choose a tool and research for information what it was made of and how it was used. They can give a report to the class. Second activity: Have students compare the day in the life of a homesteader and a day in the life of a plain's American Indian.

# DAY IN THE LIFE OF A HOMESTEADER

## MATERIAL SHEET ON ACTIVITIES

STATION #		CHORE	# OF TIME TO DO CHORE	OBJECTS NEEDED
Blue	Yellow			
1.	1.	Dressing in the AM	one boy-puts on, suspenders, & a felt hat one girl - an apron, & a bonnet	suspenders, felt hat (boys) apron, bonnet (girls)
2.	10.	Gathering Eggs	gather up 5 eggs	wooden eggs
3.	9.	Washing Clothes	scrub the cloth 10 times	bucket, washboard, cloth
4.	8.	Butter Churning	move the handle up & down 10 times	butter churn
5.	7.	Hoeing the Garden	hoe between the 2 rows in the garden rows	hoe, garden area
6.	6.	Planting	plant 10 seeds	canvas sack & seeds
7.	5.	Gathering Cow Chips or corncobs for fuel	gather five cow chips or corncobs	cow chips or corncobs
8.	4.	Fixing Fence with Nails	pound the nail ten times	board & nail
9.	3.	Stirring Batter	stir the batter 10 times	bowl, spoon
10.	2.	Sod Cutting	drag the sod cutter to the other side	sod cutter
11.	11.	Finish Up	put the suspenders, the hat, the bonnet, the apron back in the basket neatly folded	basket

## Activity 3

### Facing Disasters

**Theme:**

Homesteaders faced many disasters on their claim and learned to adapt their lives to these hardships. After facing disasters, homesteaders had to decide whether to stay on their claim and "tough it out" or head back to the east to "civilization."

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to name two reasons why homesteaders headed back to the eastern U.S.
2. Students will decide, given the information on their claims, whether they will stay or return east.

**Materials Needed:** Material Sheet: Disasters of the Homesteaders, land card #4

**Subject:** science, social studies, geography

**Skills:** brainstorming, group skills, analyzing, reasoning, contrasting

**Methods:** Through the use of historical disasters as examples, students will see what types of disasters homesteaders might have faced, the effects of the disasters, and how to adapt to the disasters. Students will have to decide whether to stay or return east when they are given additional information about their land claims.

1. Ask students to define a disaster? Explain that homesteaders faced many disasters and adverse situations.
2. Divide students into five groups. Hand out two disasters from the Material Sheet: Disasters of the Homesteaders to each group.
3. Students are to brainstorm together to answer the following:
  1. How would these disasters affect homesteaders?
  2. How would they deal with each disaster?
  3. What could they learn from the disasters?
4. Have students relate their disasters and what they decided to the entire class.
5. Have students name other possible disasters homesteaders might have faced.
6. Tell students that many people failed on their homestead claims and were never able to prove up. Why do they think this might happen? Have them think about this while they complete the activity. Tell them that Claimsey will be sharing his disasters with the class and will tell them whether he stayed on his claim or headed back east.
7. Hand back to students their land cards from previous activities with land card #4 attached to it. Explain that students have to look at the disasters they have on their claims. They must decide whether to stay and "tough it out" or to head east. On a sheet of paper, they need to list what was good and bad on their claims to help them decide whether to stay or go.
8. Have students share with the class the disasters they faced on their homesteads and their decision to stay or go. They have to give reasons why they decided to stay or go. The class can make suggestions to the student to try to influence their decisions the other way.
9. Share with the class Claimsey's disasters.  
Claimsey:  
When I first came out for my "free land," I thought it would be easy. Just build myself a home, plow my land, sow the seeds,

and harvest the crops. But it didn't work out that way. I faced many tough situations as did many of my neighbors. I think all in all, it was easier for me than my wife. I left the soddy every day to work in the fields. Sometimes, I ran into several neighbors who were passing by. My wife stayed home with the children, working hard. She missed the social life we had back east where there were people just across the street or down the road. At first, my nearest neighbor was 5 miles away, but as the land was claimed up, the neighbors were only a couple of miles away. The money my wife made from selling eggs and butter was her saving grace and in a way, mine too. It paid for a pair of boots for our oldest son and cloth to make new clothes for all of us.

Just when we both were settling in, the hoppers appeared. The day was bright except for a dark cloud way off in the distance. As the cloud got closer and closer, it blotted out the sun, and then they came down. Grasshoppers were everywhere, in the garden, the well, the house, on every green thing, even the clothes. And they ate it all. There was nothing left. We didn't know how we would make it, but we survived. The next year, the hoppers returned. They'd laid eggs in the ground the year before, and the eggs all hatched. It started all over again, only not as bad as the year before. Heading back east crossed my mind several times. But the hogs were good, and I was able to get a good price. With the hog money, I was able to buy a hand corn planter which saved me time in the fields.

That winter the blizzards hit, and they hit hard. There were huge drifts over the top of a man's head, burying everything in sight. Half my cattle were frozen in their tracks. It nearly wiped me out. I went out digging in the snow for days. I came back with very few of my stock animals left alive.

The next year went well, and I talked my wife out of leaving for the east. She was itching to go. Life seemed better. The crops were good, and we had a little extra from the butter and eggs my wife sold. The following summer the drought hit. There was no rain for days on end. Crops dried up and withered in the fields. Even the shade was hot. It became so dry, the prairie caught on fire. The fire went right over the soddy, but that soddy held together and kept us safe. Finally the rain came and the fire was doused.

My wife and I decided to stay. The place was nearly ours, and we had put in years of hard work. I was almost ready to go back to blacksmithing, but after the fire, my wife decided the soddy wasn't so bad. Like I said, this place, it grows on you.

**An Exploring Experience:** Have students write one of the following: If they decided to head back, how did they travel to the east? What did they do with their claim? If they decided to stay, what did they do to survive?

# DISASTERS OF THE HOMESTEADERS

## MATERIAL SHEET

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### Disaster #1 - Grasshoppers

"I thought to save some of my garden by covering it with sacks, but the hoppers regarded that as a huge joke, and enjoyed the awning thus provided, or if they could not get under, they ate their way through... They had a neat way of eating onions. They devoured the tops, and then ate all of the onion from the inside, leaving the outer shell. "

- Mary Lyon, *Pioneer Women*, page 102

### Disaster #2 - Drought

"When the hot winds blew like a simoom for days together, and no clouds scudding across the blue sky made grateful showers, one could almost believe that what had been in late geographies called 'The Great American Desert' was within walking distance. The leaves on the trees shriveled and dried up, and every living thing was seeking shelter from the hot rays of the sun. The earth opened in great cracks several inches across and two feet deep. We used to play these were earthquake crevices and scores of imaginary people met an untimely end."

- *Pioneer Women*, page 100

### Disaster #3 - Blizzard

"...by ten o'clock everyone realized that the country was in the grip of a terrible blizzard, the wind blowing a gale and the snow coming in a blinding rush. By morning, nothing could be seen, and in order to care for the stock in the barns, it was necessary to draw a rope from house to barn. The cold was so intense that fires had to be kept going in the house day and night, and many people suffered from a lack of provisions and fuel. This continued for four days. Cattle on the range could not be cared for and it was not possible to search for them until after the fourth day of the storm. Losses were extremely heavy and searchers would find them frozen to death, some with their mouths frozen shut, some with their feet frozen."

- Ary Johnson, *Pioneer Women*, page 92

### Disaster #4 - Tornado

"One afternoon the sky took on a peculiar coppery hue and to the southeast small clouds of dust kept rising above the swells and ridges that marked the horizon line, expanding and thinning until lost in the surrounding air, similar clouds constantly rising to take their places. ... they stood watching this curious display of color and formation, when suddenly they saw a well-defined funnel-shaped cloud separate itself from the dusty mass and move rapidly in their direction. They were almost panic stricken when they saw it so near that it obscured from their view an old sod house that stood two miles to the southeast. ... the teacher seized the kindling hatchet with the idea of chipping a hole in the floor or prying up some boards."

- Cyrus Russel, *Pioneer Women*, page 166-167

### Disaster #5 - Hail

"A mass of black clouds loomed up in the West, distant thunder boomed and lightning streaked the sky and cut through the landscape and then with a rush and roar came the hail, devastating everything. After the storm has passed, the Groves ranch was damaged thousands of dollars, the acres of feed beaten into the ground, there was no pasture for the thousands of white faces"

- Susan Proffitt, *Pioneer Women*, page 101

## **Disaster #6 - Prairie Fires**

"In those days of endless sweep of prairies, when the tall grass became dry from premature drying from drought or early frost, it was a signal for close vigilance in watching the horizon all around for prairie fires. A light against the sky told of a prairie fire in that direction and great anxiety was felt if the wind happened to be in your direction. At times the fires would be such that the flames could be seen creeping up the hillsides, and would spread over great stretches of ground. The Saline River which almost surrounded our place was considered a security, but sometimes the gales of wind blowing masses of loose grass or weeds would cause the fire to "jump" the river."

- Agnes Barry, *Pioneer Women*, page 82

## **Disaster #7 - Flash Flood**

"The creek was up to the house and still pouring down. My husband investigated and found that the underpinning of the house was going and that we had to get out. We took a lantern and matches and some blankets, and started for the side hills. When we opened the door to get out, the water came up to our necks. We had a struggle to get out and I can't tell to this day how we ever made it but the Lord must have been with us. My husband carried the baby girl in his arms as high as his head. We soon got out of the deepest water, as there was a turn in the creek. We went by way of the horse stable and found we would be safe in it. Still the water was up and it was pitch dark. The matches were wet, so we couldn't light the lantern. We stayed there until the storm abated and the water went down... When daylight came it was a sad sight to behold. Our cow barn and ponies were swept away, also our stack of millet. Practically everything we had was gone or ruined. "

- Emma Mitchell New, *Pioneer Women*, page 90-91

## **Disaster #8 - Dust Storms**

"There was no sound but the roar of the wind, and the rattle of dust and sand on his cap. He shouted again, and then stopped with his back to the wind to listen, but there was no reply. He pulled his muffler back from his ears, and shouted once more. He thought he heard voices...just an instant... then the din of the wind drowned everything. He ran frantically back and forth, shouting and peering in every direction, through half closed eyes; but he heard no answering call, and he saw nothing but clouds of dust driven by the raging wind."

- *Sod and Stubble*, page 256

## **Disaster #9 - Failed Crops**

"One year in particular I recall. It was along in the nineties. We had a large field of corn as fine as corn could grow. One Sunday we drove around the field admiring and rejoicing. It was like a garden, not a weed to be seen and all in the tassel. To us it looked like payment, then came a hot wind and by sundown that corn wasn't worth cutting. Grasp a handful of leaves and you could powder it all up in your hand almost like charred paper. Such things happened far oftener than a crop was grown successfully and harvested without some loss or other."

- Jessie Shepard, *Pioneer Women*, page 60

## **Disaster #10 - Accidents**

"On afternoon of this day, ... the hem of my dress caught on an axle-handle, precipitating me under the wheels both of which passed over me, badly crushing the left leg, before Father could stop the oxen. Seeing me clear of the wheels he picked me up and carrying me in his arms ran to stop the team, which had become unmanageable from fright. A glance at my limb dangling in the air as he ran revealed to him the extent of the injury I had received..."

- *Women's Diaries of a Westward Journey*, page 39

**Land Card #4  
Claim #1**

Between 1916-1921, you had floods (1916, 1920), received low prices on crops (1920, 1921), and your crops failed (1920, 1921).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #2**

Between 1903-1908, you had hail which destroyed your crops (1904) and 3 poor crop yields (1906, 1907, 1908).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #3**

Between 1892-1897, you had drought (1893-1897) and your crops failed (1893-1897).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #4**

Between 1868-1872, you had a fire (1873) and 2 blizzards (1871, 1873).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #5**

Between 1908-1913, you had a hail storm (1910) and a tornado (1912).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #6**

Between 1869-1874, you had a fire (1873), 2 grasshopper invasions (1869, 1874), and 2 blizzards (1871, 1873).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #7**

Between 1907-1912, you had a blizzard (1907), a hail storm (1910), and 2 tornadoes (1911, 1912).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #8**

Between 1880-1885, you had a fire (1880), blizzards (1880, 1881), a flood (1880), and received low prices for your crops (1880-1885).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #9**

Between 1917-1922, you had a flood (1920) and received low prices on your crops (1920, 1921, 1922).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #10**

Between 1883-1888, you had a blizzard (1886), a flood (1883), and received low prices on your crops (1883-1885).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #11**

Between 1902-1907, you had a blizzard (1907).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #12**

Between 1872-1877, you had a fire (1873), 2 grasshopper invasions (1874, 1875, 1876), and a blizzard (1873).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #13**

Between 1905-1919, you had a blizzard (1907) and 2 tornadoes that did a little damage to your house (1906, 1908).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #14**

Between 1919-1924, you had a flood (1920) and received low prices on your crops (1920, 1921, 1922, 1923).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #15**

Between 1903-1908, you had a sandstorm (1905) and a blizzard (1907).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #16**

Between 1894-1899, you had drought (1894-1897) and your crop failed (1894-1899).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #17**

Between 1913-1918, you had a tornado that destroyed your crops (1915) and a flood (1916).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #18**

Between 1880-1885, you had a fire (1880), a flood (1880), 2 blizzards (1880, 1881), and received low prices on your crops (1882-1884).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #19**

Between 1872-1877, you had a fire (1873), a drought (1875), and 3 grasshopper invasions (1874, 1875, 1876).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #20**

Between 1910-1915, you had a tornado that destroyed your house (1914).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #21**

Between 1896-1901, you had a drought (1896, 1897) and your crops failed (1896, 1897, 1898).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #22**

Between 1885-1890, you had drought (1889, 1890), your crops failed (1889, 1990), a blizzard (1888), a flood (1880), and received low prices on your crops, 1886-88).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #23**

Between 1891-1896, you had a drought (1893-96) and your crops failed (1894, 1895).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #24**

Between 1918-1923, you had a tornado destroy your crops (1919) and a flood (1920).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #25**

Between 1875-1880, you had a fire (1880), a drought (1875), 2 blizzards (1880, 1881), 2 grasshopper invasions (1875, 1876), a flood (1880), and received low prices on your crops (1880).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #26**

Between 1899-1904, you had a drought (1899) and your crops failed (1899).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #27**

Between 1910-1915, you had a hail storm that destroyed your crops (1912).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #28**

Between 1901-1906, you had a sandstorm (1901), hail damage (1902, 1904), a flood (1906) and a blizzard (1907).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #29**

Between 1884-1889, you had a drought (1889), failed crops (1889), a blizzard (1886) and received low prices on your crops (1887-1889).

**Land Card #4  
Claim #30**

Between 1920-1925, you had a fire (1925), 2 floods (1921, 1923), and hail destroyed your crops (1923).

# THE LEGACY



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## Unit Six

## The Legacy

### UNIT SIX

The following is background information for creating lesson plans. Activities start on page 102.

#### Free Land?

In 1862 when the cry went out that there were millions of acres of free land out west, people moved west to stake their claims. As many of the people who answered this call found out, the promise of the land being free fell short of the bitter truth. While the monetary expense of filing a homestead was relatively cheap, payment was very high in terms other than cash. The free land was not really free. The Homestead Act created disruptions that produced both winners and losers.

#### Prairie



For the prairie, the results of homesteading were harsh. Land, which for a million years stayed intact as prairie, was virtually changed in a few decades. The homesteaders plowed the prairie sod to make fields to plant crops. Today, only small remnants of virgin prairie exist.

Some areas of tallgrass prairie have been restored with assistance from humans. For animals like the bison, the swallow-tailed kite, the Eskimo curlews, the buffalo wolf, and the badger, the struggle for survival left them greatly decreased in number or even extinct. The onslaught of over hunting and rapid removal of the native grasslands left many animals unable to survive. Others like the coyote, meadowlark, and white-tailed deer learned to adapt and even flourished for a

while under the changes. For the prairie, there were few winners, but many losers.

#### American Indians

With the passing of the bison and much of their traditional homelands, Plains Indians were devastated by the change in the native prairie. Their cultures revolved around intricacies of the prairie ecosystem. When that ecosystem was plowed up, changes had to



follow. Left with little choice but to comply with treaty demands, tribes gave up their homelands and traditional way of life. The intent of the U.S. government was to make the American Indian Nations live like "white settlers." The government passed laws to prohibit the native people from practicing their traditions and beliefs. Many tribes buried their traditional ways underground and hid it from the eyes of those who would try to abolish it. Even with the demise of the grasslands, the culture was able to survive in part. Few would disagree that the Plains Tribes were losers, but some of their old traditions survived.

#### Homesteaders

To homesteaders, the cost of the changing the prairie was high. Many came from east of the Mississippi River and Europe to start a new life. They wanted to accomplish the dreams they each thought they deserved. The homesteaders came to a land of vast grasses that had survived for a million years. They tried to make a life for themselves and their families. Few understood or knew of the difficulties they would be forced to face. Approximately fifty percent of the people who came out west to homestead, gave up and either returned "home" or moved to the towns

and cities of the Midwest. In Custer County, Nebraska, during a three-week period in the 1880s, more than 8,000 people left and returned east. These people represented the many for whom the difficulties were too great. For others, there was nothing for them to go back to and everything holding them to their claim. They struggled, and with nothing better to do than stay, they learned to survive. For many, their children's lives were less harsh because of the struggles of their parents. This was what many of the homesteaders came for, a better life for their children. In that sense, the changes the homesteaders faced were difficult, but they believed themselves to be successful. Those who managed to stay and "tough it out" created an agricultural empire for a growing nation.

## The Nation

In one of the greatest changes ever accomplished by any nation, the United States government gave up 270 million acres of land in small tracts to its occupants. This policy was copied from no other nation's system. It was originally and distinctively American.

The population of the United States doubled in less than forty years after the enactment of the Homestead Act. During that time, ten more states were added to the Union. Towns and cities developed in the West. Education was valued, and brought the sons and daughters of immigrants together with children born of United States citizens. Across the prairies and plains, agricultural colleges were established as a result of the Land Grant College Act of July 2, 1862. The combination of education, personal initiative, invention and commerce led to changes in technology and communication.

More efficient farm machines were developed, and the Homestead Act no longer fit the changing needs of farmers moving further west. Much larger tracts of land were irrigated or ranched to make them profitable. In 1904 the Kinkaid Act allowed 640 acre homesteads in designated areas. In 1976 the Homestead Act was finally repealed for all States, except Alaska, where it remained in force until 1986.



For more than a century, the Homestead Act influenced the character, prosperity, and values of the nation.

Technology, efficiency, crop rotation, and soil conservation propelled one century's farmers into another century of global agricultural dominance. American farms of the Great Plains continue to supply ample food for this nation's people and millions around the world. The ethic of hard work on one's own land has left a legacy of vast economic prosperity and creative inspiration. It also left rifts and scars of misunderstanding between people of different cultures that are still felt today.

Artists, musicians, architects, and photographers have captured the drama of these conflicts and stories. The prairie and its people have contributed a unique legacy to the myriad forms of American art. It is in the novels of Willa Cather and John Steinbeck, Vine and Ella Deloria and Charles Eastman. The varieties of tone and texture are captured in the music of Woody Guthrie, Aaron Copland, Virgil Thompson, and Kevin Locke. The prairie horizon infuses the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. Daily traditions of the homesteader are defined in the quilts of Grace Snyder and the photographs of Solomon D. Butcher. Paintings by Harvey Dunn, ballets staged by Martha Graham, and stories collected by Matthew "Sitting Bear" Jones celebrate this rich legacy. It is not just the history of the past, but the continuing legacy of the Homestead Act that merits research and study.

## Activity 1

### Cost of the Legacy

**Theme:**

The concept of "free land" was really a misnomer. For the prairie ecosystem, homesteaders, and the American Indians, there was a cost to be paid and it was often very high.

**Objective:**

Students will be able to name a "cost" to each of the following: the prairie ecosystem, the homesteaders, and the American Indians.

**Materials Needed:** paper, pencil

**Subject:** social studies

**Skills:** brainstorming, analyzing

**Methods:** Students will learn about the high costs of homesteading. The price paid was not always monetary. Different costs were incurred by the prairie, the people who came west to homestead, and American Indians.

1. Explain the different costs of an item to students. In other words, cost is not always something you pay money for. It can be something you have to give up in order to receive something you want. Have students suggest some costs for something they want. Example: Giving up time to watch TV instead of studying means you may not do well on a test. Or taking a trip to another part of the country might mean you can not participate in a summer camp program.
2. Divide students into groups of four. Assign each person in the group a task to do (leader, recorder, task keeper, timer).
3. In groups, students need to determine the "costs" of the Homestead Act of 1862 and whether it had a negative or positive effect on each of the following: Prairie ecosystems, Homesteaders, American Indians.
4. Each group needs to answer the following questions: (it might help students to pretend to be each of the three groups that paid a price).
  1. What was it like for the prairie ecosystem, settlers, American Indians before the Homestead Act?
  2. What was it like after the Homestead Act took effect?
  3. What changed for the prairie, homesteaders, and American Indians?
  4. What was good and what was bad?
  5. What price did each pay for the Homestead Act in terms of what was gained and what was lost?
5. Gather together in a large group and talk about what the students discovered.

## Activity 2

### The Homestead Play

**Theme:**

The homesteaders came west for what they thought was free land and found that it came with a high cost not just for themselves, but for American Indians and the prairie environment. Whole ways of life changed, some for better and some for worse, but always at a high cost for all.

**Objective:**

1. Students will be able to pull together everything they have learned in the different units (prairie balance, people of the prairie, homestead history, prairie life, and legacy) to create a play.

**Materials Needed:** a variety of possible items: tape recorder, background music, scripts, costumes, props, video camera, if available

**Subject:** social studies, science, art

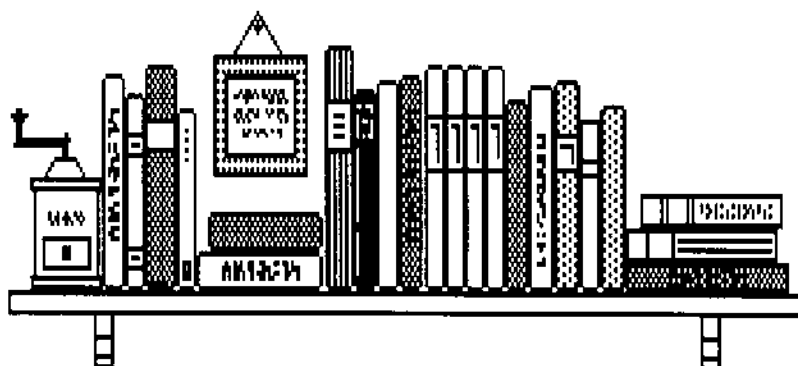
**Skills:** groups skills, communication, understanding, comprehension, analyzing, knowledge, creativity, transposition

**Methods:** Students will create a play based on what they have learned about homesteading.

1. As a group, assist students in writing a play about the Homestead Act of 1862 that includes aspects of the different units of prairie balance, people of the prairie, homestead history, prairie life, and legacy. Have students present the play to the school.

**Exploring Experiences:** Have students create a bulletin board about Homesteading and the Homestead Act of 1862. Have students learn about other lands acts such as the Pre-Emption, Kincaid, and Timber Cultures Acts. How did these acts affect homesteading, the prairie ecosystem, and American Indians.

# RESOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY



## Unit Seven

# RESOURCE MATERIALS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

## UNIT SEVEN

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following videos and films are available from the Educational Service Unit #5 in Beatrice, Nebraska, (402) 223-5277. Those outside of Educational Service Unit #5, should contact their local unit. ID numbers will be different at other units.

ID#	Title	Media Type	Time(minutes)
9107	CADDIE WOODLAWN	video	104
	Caddie's courage and friendship averts a massacre between the Indians and settlers		
2100	DISCOVER NEBR: LAND/PIONEER	video	10
	Features Homestead National Monument of America, Capital, Elephant Hall		
5387	FIDDLES AND WHAMMYDIDDLES	film	17
	2 children of pioneer times show us their toys: dolls, wooden tops etc.		
5728	FRONTIER EXPERIENCE	video	25
	A family's first year on the frontier in 1869. Perspective of westward movement.		
5506	GREAT PLAINS; COMMUNITIES	film/video	25
	Describes early towns and the eagerness of the settlers to create stability.		
5508	GREAT PLAINS; FARMING	film/video	28
	Tells of blizzards, grasshoppers, dust storms and drought faced by settlers.		
5505	GREAT PLAINS; PEOPLE	film/video	23
	Traces immigrant patterns of the settlers and the diverse cultures.		
9072	INDIANS OF THE PLAINS	video	17
	An Indian boy learns the culture of the Plains Indians from his father.		

4254 PIONEER LIVING: EDUCATION  
film/video 11

Shows how school was conducted and recreational activities played.

4250 PIONEER LIVING; HOME CRAFTS  
film/video 11

Shows crafts and skills the pioneer family had to know to survive.

4251 PIONEER LIVING; PREPAR. FOODS  
film/video 11

Shows preparations for winter: smoking meat, preserving apples, bread baking and making butter.

4552 PIONEER LIVING; THE FARM  
film/video 11

Shows clearing and plowing fields, planting crops, harvesting, and threshing.

4249 PIONEER LIVING; THE HOME  
film/video 11

Follows a pioneer family of the early 1800's as they build a log cabin.

4253 PIONEER LIVING; THE VILLAGE  
film/video 11

Observes women buying and bartering at the general store.

5241 PIONEER LIVING; INDIAN LORE  
film/video 14

Shows pioneer wagon trails and explores origins of Indian dances.

8235 PRAIRIE  
video 15

Looks at North America's Prairie grassland, plants and animals.

9504 YELLOWSTONE: RENEWAL/FIRE  
video 17

Shows how the fires helped the forest in allowing the sun in for new plant growth.

**Additional titles are available from the ESU #5, please see catalog for further details or check with your local Education Service Unit.**

## Reading List for Students

### AUTHOR/ TITLE

Brink, Carol Ryrie, 1895-1981.  
*Caddie Woodlawn*

Chambers, Catherine E.  
*Frontier Dream*  
*Frontier Farmer*

Conrad, Pam,  
*Prairie Son*

Fowler, Allan  
*Corn - On and Off the Cob*

Fritz, Jean,  
*The Cabin Faced West*

Geisert, Bonnie and Arthur  
*Haystack*

Gintzler, A.S.  
*Rough and Ready Homesteaders*  
*Rough and Ready Railroaders*

Goble, Paul  
*Buffalo Woman*  
*The Girl Who Loved Horses*

Greene, Carol  
*Laura Ingalls Wilder: Author of the Little House Books*

Kalman, Bobbie  
*One Room School*  
*Tools and Gadgets*

Lampman, Evelyn Sibley, 1907-1980.  
*Bargain Bride*

Lawlor, Laurie,  
*Addie Across the Prairie*  
*Addie's Dakota Winter*

Lerner, Carol  
*Seasons of the Tall Grass Prairie*

MacLachlan, Patricia  
*Sarah, Plain and Tall*  
*Skylark*

Means, Florence Crannell, 1891-1980.  
*A Candle in the Mist: A Story for Girls*

Rickman, David  
*Plains Indian Coloring Book*

Rounds, Glen  
*Sod-Houses on the Great Plains*  
*The Treeless Plains*

Rowan, James  
*Prairies and Grasslands*

Shaw, Janet Beeler,  
*Changes for Kirsten: A Winter Story*  
*Happy Birthday, Kirsten: A Springtime Story*  
*Kirsten Learns a Lesson: A School Story*  
*Kirsten Saves the Day: A Summer Story*  
*Kirsten's Surprise: A Christmas Story*  
*Meet Kirsten, An American Girl*

Taylor, Dave  
*Bison and the Great Plains*

Walters, Anna Lee  
*Two-Legged Creature: An Otoe Story*

Watts, Franklin  
*Pawnee*

Wilder, Laura Ingalls, 1867-1957.  
*By the Shores of Silver Lake*  
*Farmer Boy*  
*The First Four Years*  
*Little House in the Big Woods*  
*Little House on the Prairie*  
*Little Town on the Prairie*  
*The Long Winter*  
*On the Banks of Plum Creek*  
*These Happy Golden Years*